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What if Macron Wasn't Just Putting on a Show for Donald Trump?

Siddhartha Mitter

It must have been a tempting prospect for a political prodigy.

Emmanuel Macron is young and intelligent, with a charmed career. He jumped the generational queue and scrambled French politics with his out-of-nowhere presidential victory. Then he completed his disruption from the center when his brand-new party won an absolute majority in parliament. Now, Macron sees that for at least three and a half years of his five-year term, his U.S. counterpart will be Donald Trump. Not ideal, perhaps. But why not win him over, smother him with kindness?

And so Macron became the self-appointed Trump Whisperer. Over the course of two days in Paris last week, the two presidents reviewed troops, paid homage at the tomb of Napoleon, dined in the Eiffel Tower restaurant with their spouses, heard a military band perform a Daft Punk medley, and added to their archive of competitive-primate handshakes. They spent more time in private tête-à-tête and casual interaction than Trump usually devotes to foreign leaders. And in their comments to reporters, each underlined not just the ancient ties between France and the U.S., but their own budding personal friendship.

What's Macron up to? By inviting Trump to the Bastille Day celebration, and using the centennial of American entry into World War I as an excuse for U.S. soldiers to parade down the Champs-Élysées, he offered a prestige podium to an American president who is roundly disliked by Macron's close associates in Berlin and Brussels, not to mention by the French public, which still pines for Barack Obama. The visit also seemed to jar with Macron's fast retort when Trump announced America's withdrawal from the Paris climate accord just last month; the French president was on television within hours, with a statement in French and English reaffirming the accord and inviting American scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs to consider France their home. The slogan he deployed

that night, "Make Our Planet Great Again," was instantly interpreted as "trolling" Trump.

In fact, Macron is performing the role of French head of state as he sees it, in the vein he has already shown on multiple fronts: quasi-regal, high on ceremony, while pragmatic and somewhat ruthless. He has shown himself adept at grand gestures with mixed meanings: In June, he received Putin in the ornate surroundings of Versailles palace — again with an historical hook, this one an art exhibition on Peter the Great — and used the opportunity to exhibit himself as both welcoming of the Russian president and unafraid to challenge him. The red-carpet treatment of Trump, with its military pomp and visits to the most iconic tourist sites in Paris, is consistent with this approach, with the public display of affection turned up high as befits an alliance that stretches back to the era of Benjamin Franklin and Marquis de Lafayette.

It may seem grotesque to place Donald Trump, of all people, in this lineage, but he is the U.S. president. As French journalist Laurence Haim, a former Washington correspondent who was a Macron spokesperson during his campaign, pointed out on France Culture radio Friday morning, Macron said all along he intended to work with Trump. The first time Haim met Macron, in November, she thought he would speak ill of America's new president-elect, but he told her that Trump, having been duly elected, would need to be engaged.

On a transactional level, Macron has plenty to gain from a well-disposed Trump.

On a transactional level, Macron has plenty to gain from a well-disposed Trump. Probably not on climate — it seems unlikely that Trump's allusion that "something could happen" on that front will translate into a real shift in U.S. policy — but on a host of less-visible matters. For instance, the United States has been reluctant to consent to U.N. funding for the G-5 Sahel military force, an effort by five African governments to combat armed extremists on the continent, which France strongly backs; a signal from Trump to Nikki Haley

could soften this stance. Embracing Trump is a speculative investment for Macron; it will likely yield some small benefits, and might produce some big, if presently unknown, return.

Just as important, it costs him little — at least in the current equation. On the European front, Macron's key partners dislike Trump — beginning with Angela Merkel, who in addition has an upcoming election to deal with. Merkel met with Macron at the Elysée the morning of Trump's arrival, then quickly departed for Berlin rather than cross paths with the U.S. president. There is every likelihood that the French and German leaders are coordinating their approaches; it is too soon, and there is not yet enough evidence, for the rest of Europe to accuse France of freelancing.

As for the domestic front, Macron and his party have complete control of the French political arena; they have co-opted key figures from both right and left of center; the opposition is ideologically diffuse, and its main components — particularly the Socialist and Les Républicains parties — are in disarray. The National Front is reeling from Marine Le Pen's worse-than-expected defeat, and her leadership has taken a hit. On the insurgent left, Jean-Luc Mélenchon is a vocal presence and his La France Insoumise party a viable player, but its prospects are hostage to a broader recomposition of the left that has begun but could take many years.

Indeed,

French reaction to last week's love-fest was relatively muted, more quizzical than outraged.

French reaction to last week's love-fest was relatively muted, more quizzical than outraged. Television pundits agreed, in the main, that Macron's embrace of Trump makes sense as realpolitik and is consistent with his other international moves. France is still getting to know its new president; the Trump visit is just one episode in the discovery. (A public spat between the president and the country's top general, over defense budget issues, has caused far more shock in the last few days.) Even

though Macron proudly touted Obama's support before the election — at a time when Trump praised Le Pen — the new Trump-Macron rapport is less incongruous to the French political imagination than it might seem to Americans. The culture of the Fifth Republic favors foreign policy that looks bold, assertive, and iconoclastic when in service of the national interest.

The lurking worry about the budding Trump-Macron relationship is that Macron may actually be enjoying it. It's easy to shrug off, with a nod and a wink, the trappings of the visit — for instance, the choice of the tourist-trap Eiffel Tower restaurant (and the insipid menu) for the intimate couples' dinner on July 13 — as no more than bait for Trump's narcissism. One presumes that when Trump leered at Brigitte Macron, then remarked to her husband on her "great physical shape," the French president suppressed his disgust for the sake of diplomacy. But who knows? There is an authoritarian dismissiveness to Macron that has earned him comparisons to Charles de Gaulle and Napoleon Bonaparte. He seems to fetishize the military. He is rationing media access. Though well-spoken, he puts his command of the language in the service of trite ideas, delivered in florid speeches. And he has a growing record of casual comments loaded with class and racial contempt.

In short, Macron might not be as repulsed by Trump as, say, Angela Merkel clearly is. He may view the U.S. president as not just an unavoidable geopolitical interlocutor, but also a fun curiosity. He may, indeed, genuinely like him. We don't know — and Macron is too canny to tell us, until the moment when doing so advances a political opportunity. The more genuine the chemistry, the easier the relational aspect of Macron's role as Trump whisperer. But it will bring growing suspicion of French adventurism from Macron's EU colleagues, and, in due course, stoke a backlash at home that could prove fierce.

Dublin : It's not good to be the king

Alfred Doblin

The president's children are not qualified to be advisers to the president. They should be loyal supporters, but that's it.

Donald Trump went to Paris to celebrate Bastille Day with France's new president, Emmanuel Macron. Forget the *deux amis* handshake. The kissing. The interaction between Trump and Brigitte Macron, the French president's wife. Think about why Trump was there: to celebrate France's overthrow of the Bourbon king, Louis XVI.

Technically, Bastille Day commemorates the people's attack on the notorious Bastille prison, which was mostly empty at the time. But it led to other things. The sacking of palaces. The arrest of King Louis and his gâteau-loving wife, although the "let them eat cake" quip is viewed as more fiction than fact — le faux news.

There are lessons to learn about the end of the French monarchy. Living high on the hog when your subjects can't even afford a plate of pig's feet is bad for one's health. A government peopled with cronies, toadies and relatives is usually bad — period.

So there was Donald Trump, up to his famous coif in familial crisis, visiting the City of Light. It had just been revealed that eldest son Donald Jr. met with a Russian emissary during the 2016 campaign,

one with close ties to the Russian government.

Donald Jr., or "the Dauphin," had claimed a meeting with Russians about Hillary Clinton opposition research during the 2016 campaign never happened. But then *The New York Times* was about to publish all the nasty emails, so Donald Jr. released them first. They did not help his case, because they made clear he arranged to take a meeting with someone who promised to produce Hillary dirt and that information would demonstrate to him that the Russian government desired Trump to be the victor in the election.

Also at the meeting with Natalia Veselnitskaya, the promised Russian, were Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, and Paul Manafort, Trump's campaign chairman, among others. The list of attendees appears to keep on growing.

Forget what was said and not said. The meeting should not have happened. The Dauphin should have been off on an estate shooting wild game. Kushner should be attending to his own businesses. While political families are not new to America — think Adams, Roosevelt, Kennedy and Bush — putting your family into government is not a smart idea. It is even less smart if they have no government experience.

Trump is running the United States as if it were his company, his kingdom. It's not.

He's hired help, not the king. And the more he flirts with monarchy, the more he courts disaster. While I am not a Trump fan, I get no pleasure thinking his Louis fixation — just look at the pictures of the interior of his penthouse in New York or his private jet — could prevent him from accomplishing any part of his agenda, because not all of his agenda is bad.

Family is like garlic: A little goes a long way. In Trump's case, he should restrict family connections inside the White House to his young son and his wife, who may turn out to be his hidden asset. She is poised and charming and, as she comes out of her cocoon, is adding real style, rather than ersatz Sun King razzle-dazzle. But it is time to send Jared and Ivanka Trump back to New York.

Neither is helping Trump stay on his own message. And it is time for him to cut the cord with his business empire. He cannot serve two masters, Trump and the American people, while being the president of the United States.

Versailles is a beautiful place. I've walked through the grand rooms and gardens. It is breathtaking. But it came at a high cost. And the court of Versailles was full of intrigue, as much as gilded mirrors. Trump has

been attracted to glitz his whole life. The American presidency is not about glitz. Even the symbol of the presidency, the White House, is designed with restraint, simple and dignified.

Trump should have used his Parisian escape as a lesson in what not to do as a leader of a republic. All the beauty that is the Paris of the Bourbons is only one side of the coin. The president needs photo-ops as much as the next world leader. But in Trump's case, he needs to go out of his comfort zone to places not so grand, not etched in a history of privilege run amok.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

And he needs to go it alone. His children were not elected to any office. They are not qualified to be advisers to the president. They should be loyal supporters, but that is it. The president — any president — needs the best and the brightest in every field imaginable.

Family has its place. Invite them to dinner often.

Let them eat cake.

Alfred P. Doblin is the editorial page editor of The Record, where this piece first appeared. Follow him on Twitter: @AlfredPDoblin.

EU Takes Tough Line on North Korea Amid Differing Views Within Bloc

Laurence Norman

BRUSSELS—European Union foreign ministers swung largely behind Washington's stance on North Korea on Monday, threatening further sanctions and pressing China to push Kim Jong Un's regime to abandon its nuclear work.

Yet behind Monday's joint stance, European governments are staking out conflicting positions on one of the world's most volatile flashpoints.

Despite recent EU overtures urging dialogue on the North Korean crisis, the ministers called on Pyongyang to move toward reducing its nuclear program as a precondition for broader international talks, even as South Korea's new left-leaning president pushed military-to-military contacts with the north to ease tensions.

EU foreign-policy chief Federica Mogherini, with the backing of Sweden, Ireland and others, has been looking at how the EU could

revive discussions to help avert conflict over North Korea. They argue that pressure alone is insufficient to stop Pyongyang's nuclear work.

EU officials say Brussels may be considered a relatively neutral party by all sides, as 26 of its member states have formal diplomatic relations with Pyongyang and seven maintain embassies there. The EU has no formal role in the United Nations-backed six-party talks, which are charged with ending the nuclear standoff.

Others EU countries, including large members such as Britain, France and Germany, are wary of allowing North Korea to use talks to divide the international community. They believe stepped-up pressure on Pyongyang and China, at least for now, is the best route back to serious discussions.

Monday's EU talks were held amid mounting tensions over North Korea's nuclear program, following a

string of missile tests in recent months that showed new capabilities. These included a test earlier this month of an intercontinental ballistic missile that could potentially reach parts of the U.S.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Monday offered formal talks with Mr. Kim's regime. U.S. President Donald Trump meanwhile has upped pressure on Beijing and Pyongyang, threatening some "pretty severe things" in response to the Kim regime's missile tests. U.S. officials have said a military solution isn't off the table.

The Wall Street Journal reported last month that the EU had reached out to senior South Korean and Chinese officials, saying it was willing to play some kind of broker role if it could help. Officials have insisted, however, they would only act at South Korea's request.

"We will discuss with ministers what more we can do to facilitate a

solution that, in our view, cannot be but a diplomatic and political one," Ms. Mogherini said ahead of Monday's discussions.

Speaking after the meeting, however, U.K. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said there were "some tough words" in Monday's discussions on North Korea, with London among those making clear this wasn't the time for diplomatic outreach.

"There are some people who think we should engage early with Pyongyang. We absolutely disagree on that," he said. "They've got to make a serious move towards denuclearizing their country before it is right for us to begin a proper dialogue."

Monday's ministerial statement referred to possible new EU "restrictive measures" including efforts to limit Pyongyang's access to hard currency. The foreign ministers also said North Korea should "make credible progress on

its obligations to denuclearize" as a condition for talks on a "peaceful solution."

The ministers alluded to widespread concerns that Russia and China have done too little to cut off trade

with Pyongyang, urging "support for the full implementation of U.N. sanctions by all countries." The Trump administration is considering fresh sanctions on Chinese companies engaged in such

business. Beijing has said it fully complies with restrictive measures.

"Yes, more sanctions," Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn told reporters on Monday, adding however that that wouldn't be

enough. "We have to put pressure on China," he said. "Ninety percent of the economy of North Korea depends on China."

Bloomberg

Moss : Change Is Coming at the ECB. Just Not Quickly.

Daniel Moss

Europe will wind down its bond-buying program, but Mario Draghi is not in a hurry.

The European Central Bank is wrestling with how to exit the super-accommodative policy that's dominated Mario Draghi's tenure as president.

In trying to determine the path of this off-ramp, it might be instructive to look backward. To December of last year, to be precise. That's when the ECB took what looks in retrospect like a first tentative step back from quantitative easing, the huge program of bond buying aimed at keeping interest rates low.

At that time, officials were loath to call the initiative a taper. They may be more relaxed about labels this time, given the revival of the euro region's economy.

Draghi's scheduled appearance next month at the Federal Reserve's Jackson Hole retreat -- a kind of Davos in the world of central banking -- fueled speculation he'll unveil the exit there.

In reality, the ECB governing council's Sept. 7 meeting looks like a surer thing. That's the day policy makers will be given new forecasts on inflation and growth, providing justification for whatever route

officials ultimately choose. There's a meeting this week that may begin preparing the ground.

Don't look for a sudden end to bond purchases, and don't even think about an increase in the ECB's benchmark interest rate. The latter probably won't come until 2018, if then, according to most economists.

Although inflation is crawling upward, it hasn't hit the ECB's target of just below 2 percent since 2003. True, Draghi isn't the only central banker battling too-low inflation. (Remember when that would have been a good problem to have!) The Fed, by way of comparison, at least hit its 2 percent target in February, though it has subsequently slipped.

So in terms of inflation, the ECB really starts the conversation in a different place from the Fed, the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England. The first two have raised interest rates and the latter might do so as soon as next month.

As Draghi noted last month at the ECB's own confab in Sintra, Portugal, deflationary forces are on the run and reflationary forces are at work. Economic confidence is up, growth has accelerated for three consecutive quarters, spending and investment are on the rise.

He didn't say deflationary trends have been banished altogether. That go-slow approach is likely to carry the day. Make no mistake, the ECB does have to do something: The current program of 60 billion euros (\$69 billion) a month of bond purchases is due to end in December.

So in coming months they are likely to announce reductions in the amount of bonds they purchase to keep interest rates low. It will still be stimulative, just less so. The direction is clear; it's all about the pace officials travel.

Recent remarks from Bank of France Governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau are instructive, and not just because he is a contender to succeed Draghi, now in the home stretch of his eight-year term. In a Bloomberg Television interview, Villeroy referred a couple of times to "adapting the intensity" of policy in the autumn.

The easy translation of that is this: The ECB will begin a tapering program. Officials already sort of did that in December when bond purchases went from 80 billion a month to 60 billion.

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Not that everyone agrees. The head of the Dutch central bank frets openly about a policy mistake. Bond buying could go on too long and create a crisis by plowing too much money into the financial system. And Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann uses terms like "monetary policy normalization," usually code for ending quantitative easing much more quickly than Draghi would and getting on with the task of raising rates.

Absent a crisis, central banks tend to do things gradually. That's why some kind of taper looks like the easy option. Meanwhile, the clock ticks down to December when the ECB's bond-buying authority expires.

After the summer holiday seems like a fine time to get everyone on board. Draghi will be hoping the region's recovery doesn't "adapt its intensity" in the wrong direction before he can do so.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

U.K. Resumes Brexit Talks With EU

Jason Douglas in London and Laurence Norman in Brussels

The U.K. and the European Union began Brexit talks in earnest Monday, with a four-day negotiating session on a set of thorny issues the EU wants largely resolved before discussions turn to a future trade deal.

U.K. Brexit Secretary David Davis and the EU's top negotiator Michel Barnier returned to the negotiating table in Brussels for the first time since the official opening of talks on June 19, with the focus on U.K. and EU citizens' rights after Brexit and how much London must pay to cover the U.K.'s outstanding financial commitments to the bloc.

The two sides also are due to discuss how to manage the U.K.'s

border with Ireland after withdrawal, expected in March 2019.

The EU has insisted progress must be made on these and other separation issues before it will consider discussing future economic ties to the U.K., highlighting the challenge of agreeing a far-reaching settlement on Brexit within the 18 months remaining for talks.

"We made a good start last month, and as Michel says we are now getting into the substance of the matter," Mr. Davis said, adding that it is "time to get down to work and make this a successful negotiation."

Mr. Barnier said he and Mr. Davis will remain in touch throughout the week as their teams get to work and will reconvene "to take stock" on Thursday.

Mr. Barnier said last week there are major differences on key points. The EU proposed granting EU citizens in the U.K. and U.K. citizens in the EU rights to work and benefits similar to those that they already enjoy. The U.K. countered with proposals offering EU citizens "settled status" that confers many but not all existing rights as well as a pathway to British citizenship. There are around 3 million EU nationals in Britain and more than 1 million U.K. nationals living in the union's 27 other member states.

Despite such differences, analysts say that the two sides should be able to reach a deal on citizens' rights, but a much bigger disagreement looms over money.

The EU estimates the U.K. is on the hook for upward of €60 billion euros

(\$69 billion) in spending pledges made but not yet fulfilled.

The prospect of payment on such a scale is political dynamite in the U.K., where advocates of Brexit won last year's referendum in part on a promise to stop sending Brussels any money at all.

Boris Johnson, U.K. foreign secretary, last week dismissed such demands as "extortionate" and agreed with a colleague in Parliament that the EU could "go whistle" for such a sum.

Yet the U.K. government subsequently conceded in a written statement to Parliament that Britain is prepared to make "a fair settlement" with the EU and that it may keep making payments even after withdrawal.

"Money is clearly going to be the stormiest dossier in phase one of the negotiations," said Mujtaba Rahman, managing director at Eurasia Group.

The negotiations come amid renewed signs of squabbling between senior British politicians over policy priorities, adding to signs

of instability in Prime Minister Theresa May's government after a poor showing in a June election cost her ruling Conservative Party its Parliamentary majority and sapped her authority.

Treasury chief Philip Hammond on Sunday hit out at colleagues he accused of anonymously briefing

against him after Sunday newspapers carried critical stories. Mr. Hammond has emerged as the most vocal proponent of a Brexit deal that prioritizes safeguarding the economy over priorities advanced by staunch pro-Brexit colleagues such as immigration control.

"I think my colleagues should focus on the job that we've been elected to do," Mr. Hammond told the British Broadcasting Corp.'s Andrew Marr Show.



Maltby : Britain's secret Brexit weapon: The royal family

By Kate Maltby

Kate Maltby is a regular broadcaster and columnist in the United Kingdom on issues of culture and politics and is a theater critic for The Times of London. She is also completing a Ph.D. in Renaissance literature, having been awarded a collaborative doctoral between Yale University and University College London. The opinions expressed in this commentary are hers.

(CNN)It is 2017. Man has walked on the moon; scientific ingenuity has eradicated smallpox, split the atom and processed the bit. Yet my home country -- the United Kingdom -- still has a royal family.

As images of the latest royal outing flash around the world -- Prince William, our presumed future king, visits Poland with his wife, Catherine, and children George and Charlotte -- commentators from across the globe could be forgiven for asking if it all looks a bit archaic.

Hereditary rank, hereditary political power and privilege -- the United States abolished these in 1776.

Many in Britain would like to do the same: The annual conference of Republic, an anti-monarchy movement, convened in Newcastle-upon-Tyne this weekend. But as political insecurity rattles both Britain and the United States, the British monarchy has rarely been so popular at home.

To some in Britain, the election of Donald Trump as US President -- and the questions that hang over his campaign -- have exposed the weaknesses of presidential democracies.

Here at home, the last three years have brought us two major referendums and two general elections; voters are exhausted and divided by the bile unleashed by populist politics.

Politics have never been so personally bitter. It has become newly normal for Brits to suffer major rifts over voting differences. Members of Parliament -- particularly those who are female or Jewish -- have reported an exceptional rise in targeted political harassment.

Just over a year ago, at the height of campaigning over Brexit, a female member of Parliament was murdered in the street.

Amid all this, the British royal family looks like the most stable institution we've got. The Queen has worked with 13 prime ministers during her reign -- more than 160 in the whole Commonwealth. Few of us know who the prime minister will be in six months. Theresa May totters unsteadily as Cabinet ministers plot openly to unseat her.

Meanwhile, a resurgent but divided Labour Party waits in the wings. If it can force and win a no-confidence motion in the UK Parliament -- a real possibility when no one political party holds overall control -- we may well see another sudden election and a Labour government.

The Conservative Party's most recent election slogan -- much mocked for its ubiquity and vacuity -- was "strong and stable." Months later, it is the grandmotherly figure of Queen Elizabeth II, not the shaky persona of Theresa May, who embodies that comforting mantra.

Yet there is another reason why the Brits are clinging to the royals now more than ever. It's the real reason why William and Kate are courting headlines in Poland this week. Since the decision to leave the European Union, Britain has convulsed in an agony of introspection about its status in the world. Will striking out on our own win us more respect? Or does losing our seat at the EU table mean we have to work harder to form alliances and pay more for trade deals and political access?

Send in a British royal, however, and any government head will schedule a meeting. Or so the UK government hopes.

As young royals in a constitutional monarchy, William and Kate may not have executive power, but they embody the principle of soft power: the ability to influence, to charm, to garner the world's attention.

The playwright Mike Bartlett drew a sharp portrait of the royal couple's position in his hit play "King Charles III." At the moment of a great political triumph, his fictional Kate Middleton tells her stepmother-in-law: "Our column inches are the greatest influence that we possess." Everyone wants to be photographed next to her in Vogue.

The British Foreign Office knows this. It will have been no coincidence that Prince William's first trip after the Brexit referendum was to visit German leader Angela Merkel, giving a speech in which he celebrated Germany's relationship with the UK and assured the German public: "This partnership will continue despite Britain's recent decision to leave the European Union. The depth of our friendship with Germany will not change."

William and Kate will visit Germany again this week, after their first stop in Poland, in a trip heavily planned by the Foreign Office to consolidate personal links between the British royals and the leaders who will decide Britain's future trading access in the EU.

By taking Princess Charlotte and Prince George on their first foreign trip as a family unit, the Cambridges are introducing a new generation of ambassadors who will still be charming European audiences long after this year's chill in relations has thawed.

Does the royals' international feel-good factor justify the sheer absurdity of a system that grants privilege and power based on simple accident of birth? To many of us, it doesn't seem so. Sometimes, power is so soft that its influence looks negligible.

So focused on generating goodwill, Prince William has done little to speak out on the issue of human rights in Poland. His options to do so are limited -- the British government needs the Eurosceptic Polish government on its side in forthcoming negotiations with other EU states. What William himself feels about this as he recites platitudes written for him by the British government we will never know.

One thing is clear. Britain needs friends in Europe. Our royals are bred from birth to shake more hands in a day with shinier smiles than even the squeakiest politician. Is it a perfect system? Perhaps not. But as other diplomatic certainties crumble, Britain is feeling grateful for the durability of its secret royal weapon.



Mafia in Italy Siphons Huge Sums From Migrant Centers

Gaia Pianigiani

ISOLA DI CAPO RIZZUTO, Italy — The government provided millions of euros to care for the migrants who had arrived at the reception center at Italy's toe after traveling across deserts, war zones or choppy seas. But on many days, they were served little more than rancid chicken. Some did not eat at all when the food ran out.

At the same time, the priest who founded the local branch of the charity managing the center was spending money on expensive hotels and restaurants, splurging on fine wines and stashing thousands of euros in three safes at home, the authorities say. His business partners — mobsters and their associates — outfitted their bathtubs with golden taps. Some hid

thousands of euros in vacuum-sealed plastic bags tucked in their fireplaces.

The center's managers, including the Rev. Edoardo Scordio, were among 68 people arrested this spring on charges of fraud, misuse of public money and mafia association. A yearslong investigation exposed a vast embezzlement scheme that, the

authorities say, siphoned off nearly 36 million euros, or about \$41 million, in government money — more than a third of the €102 million provided over a decade.

The case in Calabria may be just the most glaring example of how the misery of others has provided ripe opportunity for mobsters and corrupt officials as Italy struggles to keep up with an unceasing flow of migrants

and refugees — more than 83,000 so far this year alone.

The swelling of the migrant population, investigators say, has made the running of reception centers a cottage industry of potential government corruption and mafia penetration.

In recent years, centers all over Italy have been shut for fraud or misuse of public money, exposing insufficient government oversight and often blatant corruption. In the Rome-based Mafia Capitale investigation, managers at a company that secured lucrative public bids to provide services for reception centers are currently standing trial.

"Mobsters are where power and money are," said Nicola Gratteri, one of Italy's more active anti-mafia investigators. He is the chief prosecutor in Catanzaro, in Calabria, home to one of Italy's most powerful mafia groups, the 'Ndrangheta (pronounced n-DRAHN-ghe-ta).

"Beyond cocaine smuggling, 'Ndrangheta mobsters used to be strong on extortion and public bids; now it's gaming and the migrants centers," Mr. Gratteri explained in his office, behind an armored door. "They are just one of the ways to become richer for the mafia."

The central government in Rome, as well as the European Union, provided the reception center in Calabria with roughly €30 a day for each of the migrants housed in a former NATO base surrounded by razor wire.

The money was supposed to go toward food, housing, personal items, and even social workers and Italian teachers to help the migrants integrate and learn the language.

Instead, using hundreds of hours of hidden camera recordings and reams of administrative documents, investigators say, they found that the center's catering service did not provide decent food to migrants, or

even enough, while invoicing the Interior Ministry for thousands of meals every day.

Waiters in the cafeteria were recorded on videos raising their hands in a shrug to indicate that the food had run out, while dozens were still awaiting their meal.

Migrants did not receive a daily allowance of €2.50 in pocket money, but a card that could be used only at the vending machines inside the center, allowing mob associates to profit.

The center also vastly inflated the number of migrants it was caring for, milking the government for still more money than it was due, the investigators say.

Rather than provide aid to the migrants — many of them from central Africa, Pakistan and Bangladesh — much of the money went to fund a host of projects, either for the amusement of the mobsters and their business associates, or to allow them to profit still further.

The enterprises included a sumptuous movie theater, still under construction; a new sports field; and travel agencies and boat rentals so tourists could explore the turquoise waters of the Capo Rizzuto's marine reservoir.

A portion of the money went directly to fund the local 'Ndrangheta, a family-run mafia association that is Europe's primary importer of cocaine, with tentacles all over the globe.

One benefit of the cash flow, the local authorities and residents say, was that it at least provided enough money for all the notoriously violent and reckless 'Ndrangheta families in the area, calming the competition and bloodshed among them.

Magistrates noted that the internecine war had stopped in the early 2000s, after the charity took over the reception center in Isola di

Capo Rizzuto, a town of 15,000 in one of Europe's poorest regions.

The last violent episode happened in 2004 on a dusty road, bordered by the wind turbines that mobsters operated, leading from the town to one of its pristine beaches, when rival mobsters annihilated the most prominent member of the resident family, Carmine Arena.

A hail of machine gun bullets devastated the armored Lancia car in which he was leaving his home, a villa hidden behind a high wall and an iron gate.

"Wars stop when cash starts flowing in," said Mr. Gratteri, the prosecutor, who is a co-author of a dozen historical books on Italy's indigenous criminal groups. "Then, they no longer have a reason to fight and attract police attention."

In fact, the 'Ndrangheta uses violence only to defend its business or territory, and it flourishes when it has consensus, he said.

In Isola di Capo Rizzuto, the charity involved in the scandal was the local independent branch of Misericordia, run by Father Scordio.

The nationwide charity does nonprofit social work — like operating ambulances and civil protection services — through public bids or donations, and with the help of volunteers. Prosecutors have found no connection between the national charity and the local scandal.

The Misericordia of Isola di Capo Rizzuto, unusual in size, provides over 300 jobs. The local charity's managers have been suspended, and the association has been put under judicial administration, though it still runs the center.

"In Isola, everyone works or knows someone who works for them, so people prefer not to take sides," said Antonio Tata, the local representative for Libera, the anti-mafia association also founded by a priest, the Rev. Luigi Ciotti.

Mr. Tata explained that a few years ago, Father Scordio, in a public sermon, had spoken of an "invasion" when Libera took part in a public bid to work about 250 acres of olive groves, wheat and barley fields confiscated from the Arena family after members were convicted of mob association.

Father Scordio seemingly disliked the presence of the anti-mafia association in his area.

"We couldn't think that he had organized such a business," Mr. Tata said of Father Scordio. "But we knew that, in small towns like Isola, people consider normal the presence of 'Ndrangheta families. They are historically used to them."

But other residents said it seemed clear to all that the charity and the mobsters were in business together.

A resident who has lived in Isola di Capo Rizzuto for 40 years said people in the town suspected something was wrong, with the migrants protesting in the streets about their squalid living conditions despite the millions of euros in government aid. The resident declined to give a name for safety reasons.

The migrants fleeing poverty and violence in their home countries find themselves struggling here.

"We are young and healthy," said a 20-year-old Pakistani who gave his name only as Touraqui and who has been at the center for four months. "We need to work."

The migrants try to find work, but it is not easy to do so.

"I am walking for kilometers at sunset to find work in the fields to make some money," said a man named Sunday, 25, from Nigeria, who worked in Libya for almost a year.

"But we just can't live here," he said. "I've come to zero in this place."



Bershidsky : Who's Right in the Battle Over Polish Courts

Leonid Bershidsky

The ruling populists have some valid points, but they are too eager to control the country's judiciary.

The Polish ruling party's relentless fight for control of the courts is evidence that a properly functioning judiciary is the toughest element of democracy to get right.

On Sunday, tens of thousands assembled in front of court

buildings, starting with the Supreme Court in Warsaw, in support of judiciary independence and against a court reform the governing Law and Justice Party (PiS) is pushing through parliament. For the opposition, the reform means that Poland "will cease not only to be a liberal democracy but a democracy at all." The judicial community is dead set against the PiS proposals, and the European Commission is already at odds with the government over its treatment of Poland's

Constitutional Tribunal. But the case isn't clear-cut, and it raises the question of how a country with a history of deep-rooted corruption can obtain a competent, independent judiciary.

In Poland, judges are selected for presidential approval by the National Council of the Judiciary, which mostly consists of respected jurists. Last week, the PiS-dominated parliament voted to dissolve the council and give itself the power to

appoint its members. The ruling party also introduced a bill that would terminate the tenures of Supreme Court judges and allow the justice minister to decide which members of the top court would be allowed to keep their seats. Combined, the two measures would give PiS and Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro -- a controversial law-and-order champion with a penchant for showy investigations and arrests -- almost full control of the Polish judiciary. It looks bad,

and Amnesty International has condemned the PiS legislative onslaught as an attempt to end judiciary independence in Poland.

PiS can't be accused of inconsistency. The last time it was in government, after the 2005 election, it attempted to push through similar reforms and was also criticized. The party's argument, then and now, is that the judges have turned into an entrenched caste, an elite in need of a shake-up. In an interview with the news portal Onet, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the PiS leader, who holds no official government post, called the courts "one of the strongholds of post-Communism." He pointed out that the National Council of the Judiciary was set up in 1989 by the last parliament elected under the Communist system, and argued that it perpetuated the legacy of the old legal system and its "rampant Leftism."

PiS talking points include corruption among judges and the court system's slowness in processing cases. Opponents deny both: In the last 15 years, only five judges out of about 10,000 have been convicted of taking bribes, and the average case in the first instance courts drags on for 200 days -- about as long as in Germany but more than twice as fast as in Slovakia.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Orr : Germany Should Say Danke for U.S. Oil

Isaac Orr

German

Chancellor Angela Merkel used her closing speech at the recent Group of 20 summit to chide President Trump for withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris climate accord. Yet the German people will benefit far more from the American president's focus on facilitating U.S. energy production and boosting exports than from Mrs. Merkel's climate policies. They have increased residential electricity prices for German households and failed to achieve any meaningful reductions in fossil-fuel consumption or carbon-dioxide emissions.

Germany has developed a reputation as a green-energy superpower, but in many respects it isn't. Of all the energy used in Germany in 2016, 34% came from oil, 23.6% from coal, 22.7% from natural gas, 7.3% from biomass, 6.9% from nuclear, 2.1% from wind power, and 1.2% from solar. Waste,

In 2014, when the European Union polled citizens about corruption, 82 percent of Poles said graft was widespread in their country; about a quarter of them said the courts were corrupt. On the other hand, 39 percent, one of the highest proportions in the EU, said the same of political parties. If the goal is to clamp down on corruption, it makes little sense to hand over control of the courts to politicians. Empowering the Justice Ministry and the parliament to purge the judiciary may ultimately mean that every time the government changes, so will the line-up of the top courts.

But the PiS also has a point. Poland may have made a mistake in the way it ensured what lawyers call "political insularity" by giving the elected authorities so little control over the selection and appointment of judges. In the U.S., which has one of the world's most independent judiciaries, the president picks federal judges. Germany has struggled to choose an optimal mechanism of judge selection, and a number of different ones are used, including appointment by justice ministers and by committees formed by regional parliaments. Judges take part in the nomination process, but it's usually controlled by public officials.

In Poland, though the judicial community essentially co-opts new

judges, the Justice Ministry used to have an alternative mechanism for putting people on courts. A 2001 law allowed it to appoint "assessors" -- trainee judges in whom the ministry could, with a court's approval, vest full judicial powers. The law was amended in 2009 to introduce a new training system for judges and the ministry lost this lever. But it was probably useful as a back door for some interaction between political power and the judiciary, which is inevitable in a functioning democracy.

In most post-Communist countries, electoral democracy turned out to be easier to introduce than a truly independent judiciary. Generational change takes longer in the legal profession than in politics because it's more knowledge-based and elitist. It's impossible to parachute a new legal establishment into a country that is trying to make a clean break with a totalitarian system. In post-World War II Germany, the Allies ran a transitional justice system, supervising the local courts -- but even so, many of the judges who had served under the Nazis couldn't be replaced. Kaczynski's argument about the Polish judicial caste would have been more relevant 15 or 20 years ago -- the natural process of change has renovated the legal elite since Communist times -- but it's not completely irrelevant. Neighboring

Ukraine's backward, corrupt, essentially unreformed judiciary is perhaps the biggest hindrance to the country's attempt to build new, trustworthy institutions.

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A higher degree of political control over the judiciary is not a bad thing in and of itself. What's wrong with the PiS approach is the populist party's urge to ride roughshod over the judicial community and the opposition. It's clearly motivated by a desire to appoint loyal judges rather than ensure some degree of public control. That's what the human rights activists and EU officials respond to, and that's why, once PiS loses political power, its reforms are likely to be rolled back. If the party's leaders had more patience to discuss best practices, they might have made a more positive and more lasting contribution.

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geothermal and hydropower accounted for the remaining 2%.

All told, Germany derived more than 80% of its total energy consumption from fossil fuels. That's bad news for a country that depends on imports. About 97% of the oil, 88% of the natural gas and 87% of the hard coal Germans consume are imported.

Though they may find it difficult to swallow, the German people will benefit from Mr. Trump's efforts to make energy resources accessible and affordable. Germans spent \$73.5 billion on imported oil in 2013, when the price of Brent crude averaged approximately \$108 a barrel. Since then, the U.S. embrace of hydraulic fracturing--also known as "fracking"--has resulted in a surge of U.S. crude oil on the world market, causing global oil prices to fall to about \$47 per barrel. Some back-of-the-envelope math suggests Germans may now pay \$41.5 billion less per year for their oil imports,

constituting an average savings of around \$1,107 (at current exchange rates) for each of Germany's 37.5 million households.

Ms. Merkel's climate and energy policies have caused residential electricity prices in Germany to spike by approximately 47% since 2006, costing the average German household about \$380 more a year. The higher prices are largely due to a 10-fold increase in renewable-energy surcharges that guarantee returns for the wind and solar-power industries. These surcharges now make up 23% of German residential electric bills.

The German people are paying far more for their household energy needs under Ms. Merkel, yet they have little to show for it. Since 2009, when Germany began to pursue renewables aggressively, annual CO₂ emissions are down a negligible 0.1%.

Meanwhile, the U.S. experienced year-over-year reductions in CO₂ emissions in 2015 and 2016, and CO₂ emissions have fallen a dramatic 14% since 2005. This has mostly been made possible by fracking—a practice banned in Germany. Fracking has allowed the U.S. natural-gas industry to compete with coal in a way that wasn't previously possible, lowering costs for everyone.

Slapping around Mr. Trump, who is deeply unpopular in Germany, might score Ms. Merkel some domestic political points. But if the German leader really wants to help the environment, she might consider scaling back the attacks. Without American energy production and exports, Germany—and the world—would be a dirtier, darker and less efficient place.

Mr. Orr is a research fellow at the Heartland Institute.

INTERNATIONAL

Here are some of the toughest battles still to be fought against ISIS

The battle of Mosul is over, but the war against the Islamic State is far from done. The militants have lost some 60 percent of the territory they controlled at the peak of their expansion, but that leaves a sizable area, mostly in Syria but also Iraq, to be recaptured. Much of it is uninhabited desert, but significant towns and cities in both countries, and almost a whole province in Syria, remain in the militants' hands. Among them are staunch Islamic State strongholds, located in some of the most remote terrain of the war. In some instances, it isn't yet clear which forces will undertake the battles, and potential local and international flash points lie ahead as competing powers vie for the chance to control territory.

Here are six of the toughest battles still to be fought.

In Syria:

Raqqa: The five-week-old battle for the Islamic State's self-proclaimed capital of Raqqa is getting underway, launched by a U.S.-backed force of Kurds and Arabs known as the Syrian Democratic Forces and aided by U.S. Special Operations troops. In the first month, they took 20 percent of the city, according to Col. Ryan Dillon, a U.S. military spokesman. That doesn't mean there another five months of

combat left, however. Past battles have proved unpredictable, with the militants crumbling or fleeing in some places and putting up a stiff fight in others. Raqqa is smaller than Mosul and less densely populated, but there is no reason to believe they will defend it any less fiercely – and the battle for Mosul lasted nine months.

Deir al-Zour: The city of Deir al-Zour is the capital of a province of the same name, both of which are almost entirely under Islamic State control. ISIS commanders and fighters have been relocating there for months from other front lines, and this is likely to be where they make their last stand. Vast tracts of the province, roughly the size of Maine, are empty desert. But the militants control a string of towns running along the Euphrates River, such as Mayadeen, where Islamic State leaders have reportedly re-congregated. Exactly who will end up waging the battles for Deir al-Zour is unclear. Most probably it will be the Syrian-Iranian-Russian alliance that moves on the city, where a small garrison of Syrian soldiers has been holding out for years. Regime loyalists have already begun advancing into the province from the southwest. But the U.S.-backed SDF also holds a northern slice of the province and could decide to head south after Raqqa, making Deir al-Zour a potential international flash point.

Bukamal (also known as Abu Kamal): This town on the Iraqi border is the southeasternmost of the Euphrates valley towns in Deir al-Zour province. The U.S. military has been trying to build a force of Syrian rebels capable of taking the town from a remote desert base 200 miles away. But their presence has created tensions between the United States and the Syrian and Iranian backed forces operating nearby, who have now blocked the way. So it now seems most likely that the eventual battle for Bukamal will also fall to Syrian government loyalists, thereby putting them back in charge of the main highway linking Damascus to Baghdad.

In Iraq:

Tal Afar: This mid-sized town around 30 miles west of Mosul is expected to be the next target of the military campaign in Iraq. It is renowned one of the Islamic State's most die-hard strongholds, with a long history of insurgency and is likely to put up stiff resistance. It is also one of the only towns in northwestern Iraq that has a sizable Shiite population, which fled when the Islamic State swept through in 2014. Now it is surrounded by Shiite militias, and although there has not yet been a decision on whether they or the Iraqi army will undertake the offensive, Tal Afar could ignite future sectarian tensions.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Hawija: Located in an isolated pocket of mostly rural territory southwest of the Kurdish-controlled city of Kirkuk, Hawija is the easternmost of the Islamic State's territories. It is also known as an early outpost of Islamic State sympathies. Hawija is likewise completely surrounded, on three sides by Kurdish peshmerga and to the south by the Iraqi army. There is no agreement yet on whether the Kurds or the Iraqi security forces, or both, will undertake the battle.

Al Qaim: Located just across the Iraqi border from Syria's Bukamal, Al Qaim is the most significant town left under ISIS control in the desert province of Anbar. It is surrounded by a large sweep of desert terrain and is another of the locations where the Islamic State is thought to have relocated many of its leading commanders. The Iraqi army will most probably lead the battle, which will link it up with whoever advances into the adjoining Syrian town of Bukamal.



Lake : Trump Just Came Very Close to Killing the Iran Deal

Eli Lake

At the last minute, the president nearly told Tillerson not to certify Iranian compliance.

Under President Barack Obama this kind of thing was routine. Since the Iran nuclear deal was reached in 2015, every few months the State Department would inform Congress that the Tehran government was in compliance.

Then Donald Trump was elected president. He had campaigned against the agreement, and many of the top aides he brought into the White House believed the Obama administration had turned a blind eye to Iran's regional predations to secure a bargain that in the end was harmful to U.S. national security.

Nonetheless, Trump's State Department in the spring certified Iran was in compliance. On Monday, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was supposed to certify Iranian compliance again. Talking points were sent to columnists. Senior administration officials briefed

analysts on a conference call. The Treasury Department was set to announce new sanctions against a number of Iranians to soften the blow for the Republican base. Allies in Congress were given a heads up.

There was just one problem: Donald Trump. In meetings with his national security cabinet, the president has never been keen on Obama's nuclear deal. What's more, Iran's regional behavior has only been getting worse since his inauguration.

So just as Tillerson was preparing to inform Congress on Monday that Iran remained in compliance with what is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Trump called it off, according to administration officials. He wanted to know his options and what would happen if Tillerson didn't make the announcement.

And for a few hours on Monday afternoon, it looked like the White House was going to tell Congress it could not certify Iran was complying, without saying Iran was in breach of the pact. This would have triggered

a 60-day period in which Congress could vote to re-impose the secondary sanctions lifted as a condition of the deal, or to strike it down altogether.

The predicament, according to administration officials, was that Congress, not to mention the other signatories to the seven-party agreement, was not prepared. Trump had yet to even put forward a broader Iran policy. What's more, the U.S. intelligence community feels that Iran is pushing the edges, but overall is in compliance Iran deal.

Eventually, Trump walked back from the ledge, and the administration certified Tehran's compliance.

But White House and other administration officials tell me the president nonetheless is serious about cracking down on Iran for its regional aggression, and is leaning closer to those of his advisers who are pushing him to pull out of the agreement that defines Obama's foreign policy legacy.

In this sense, he is moving away from some of the most important members of his national security cabinet. Administration officials tell me that National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and Tillerson have made the case that it was in the U.S. national interest to certify Iran's compliance. They argued that the deal is structured so that the U.S. and its allies delivered the benefits to Iran up front. This included sanctions relief, a recognition of Iran's right to enrich uranium, and removing Iranian companies and individuals from various sanctions lists.

The Iranians, on the other hand, have to keep allowing inspections of their nuclear sites and limit their stockpile of low-enriched uranium over the lifespan of the deal, which expires in the next 8 to 13 years. Iran has already received much of the money that was frozen in foreign banks under the crippling sanctions that brought its representatives to the negotiations. So pulling out of the deal now would leave Iran cash rich and under no obligation to cap

its nuclear stockpiles or allow international inspections.

Others in the administration, including CIA director Mike Pompeo and senior strategist Steve Bannon, have argued against the deal. In some ways this is not surprising. Pompeo was one of the pact's harshest critics when he was in Congress. Bannon has been opposed to most international agreements, from the Paris accord on climate change to the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

For now, it's worth watching what Trump administration officials say about the agreement. One talking point from White House officials on Monday was that the administration considered Iran to be in breach of

the spirit, if not the letter, of the nuclear agreement because, they say, the bargain's purpose was to enhance regional stability.

All of this is also a lesson to Western businesses hoping Iran will be a safe place to invest in the aftermath of the nuclear bargain. Administration officials on Monday said the Treasury Department was still reviewing a proposed sale of civilian airliners from Boeing to Iran's largest airline. That deal is under scrutiny because Iran uses its civilian air fleet to send supplies, personnel and weapons to the war in Syria.

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Finally, even if Trump decides to keep re-certifying Iranian compliance with the nuclear deal, the Iranians have started hinting that they consider the non-nuclear sanctions imposed by the U.S. to be violations of the agreement. Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, said this to CNN on Sunday. He pointed to Trump's speech at the G-20 summit last month in which he dissuaded foreign leaders from investing in Iran, something Zarif said undermined the spirit of the agreement.

It's best not to take anything Zarif says at face value. He is a well known dissembler. What's more, Zarif has been saying the U.S. is not

complying with the Iran deal for more than a year now.

The point, however, is that the Iran deal negotiated by the Obama administration is in trouble. Even if Trump doesn't follow his instincts and kill it, there are plenty of signs the bargain is likely to fall apart.

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**The
Washington
Post**

U.S. certifies that Iran is meeting terms of nuclear deal

By Karen DeYoung

The Trump administration certified to Congress late Monday that Iran has continued to meet the required conditions of its nuclear deal with the United States and other world powers.

But senior administration officials made clear that the certification was grudging, and said that President Trump intends to impose new sanctions on Iran for ongoing "malign activities" in non-nuclear areas such as ballistic missile development and support for terrorism.

"We judge that these Iranian activities severely undermine the intent" of the agreement as a force for international stability, one official said. Iran is "unquestionably in default of the spirit of the JCPOA," or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, that took effect in January 2016 after years of negotiations, the official said.

International monitors and other signatories of the agreement have said that Iran is meeting its terms, giving the administration little room for maneuver in providing the assessment required by Congress every 90 days.

The last certification of Iranian compliance, in April, was also followed by new sanctions on Iranian individuals and companies the administration said played a role in ballistic missile tests that are not covered by the nuclear agreement.

"We do expect to be implementing new sanctions" related to missiles and Iran's "fast boat program," the official said, but declined to specify what the measures would be. The administration has charged Iran with using military patrol boats to impede free navigation in the Persian Gulf.

Three senior administration officials briefed reporters on the certification on the condition of anonymity imposed by the White House.

Earlier in the day, Trump's national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R.

McMaster, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin previewed the sanctions in a closed-door meeting with representatives of Washington-based think tanks. Reporters were not invited.

Under the nuclear deal, Iran, which denied it was developing nuclear weapons, agreed to sharply limit the number and capability of centrifuges used to enrich uranium, give up nearly all of its previously enriched stock, and submit to intrusive verification measures in exchange for an end to U.S. and international sanctions related to the program.

Trump has called the deal fatally flawed and said he would either renegotiate it or kill it.

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

In making the certification, an official said, "The secretary of state and the president intend to emphasize that Iran remains one of the most dangerous threats to U.S. interests and to regional stability, and to highlight the range of malign

activities." They include "atrocities by the Assad regime" that Iran supports in Syria, "continuing hostility to Israel" and other actions, as well as its missile program and terrorist support.

Other signatories to the nuclear deal — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the European Union — have indicated that they think it is working.

An administration review of the JCPOA is expected to be finished before the next certification is due in October. In the meantime, officials said, they will work with allies to try to reach agreement on its flaws.

Ed O'Keefe contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

Colleagues of Princeton University Scholar Convicted of Spying in Iran Express Shock

Rick Gladstone

Colleagues of an American student from Princeton University who was jailed in Iran on spying charges expressed shock on Monday, calling him a gifted and innocent history scholar whose ordeal has traumatized his family and community.

Academics and Iran experts said the arrest and punishment of the student, Xiyue Wang, first announced Sunday in Iran, may chill scholarly ties between the United States and Iran, subverting

promises of more openness from its president, Hassan Rouhani.

"This kind of situation makes me wake up in a cold sweat," said Bruce Carruthers, the director of the Buffett Institute for Global Studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. "It is a deeply worrisome event, and I hope to God that it is not a trend or harbinger of things to come."

Despite the history of hostility between the United States and Iran, scholarly exchanges have survived. But Mr. Wang's case, Mr. Carruthers

said, shows that "a visitor like that can be a bargaining chip."

Mr. Wang, 37, a naturalized American citizen from China, was arrested in Iran last August while researching Persian history for his doctoral thesis. He had been examining and scanning public records of events during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Iran's judiciary, which broke the news on Sunday of Mr. Wang's arrest and punishment, said Mr. Wang had entered the country "under the cover of a researcher," had secretly worked for American

and British intelligence via a "spider web" of connections and had digitally archived 4,500 documents.

Mr. Wang was sentenced to 10 years in prison, which could further irritate relations with the United States, where Iran's incarceration of Americans has been a festering issue.

Princeton University acknowledged after the announcement that it had known about Mr. Wang's arrest but had sought to keep it quiet, respecting his family's wishes while working with the State Department and other channels to secure his

release. Mr. Wang has a wife and a child in the United States.

In a statement to Princeton faculty, students and staff on Monday, the university's president, Christopher L. Eisgruber, explained the school's earlier silence, saying it reflected "the recommendation of multiple advisers inside and outside of government who counseled us that publicity might be harmful to our student's interests."

Mr. Wang's colleagues were frank in their anger about what had befallen him.

"Xiyue Wang is an unbelievable scholar, father, and classmate," Elaine Ayers, a doctoral candidate in the history of science, wrote on her Twitter account. "Beyond concerned for his safety and wellbeing."

Anna Lind-Guzik, a graduate student in Russian history, wrote: "This is nuts! Xiyue Wang is a friend.

We did all our coursework together. Hes a kind family man, great scholar & furthest thing from a spy."

Mr. Wang's thesis adviser, Professor Stephen Kotkin, strongly defended Mr. Wang's work in a statement sent via email, describing him as a linguistically gifted doctoral candidate.

Mr. Kotkin also implicitly criticized the Iranian judicial authorities, saying they made a colossal misjudgment about what constitutes espionage. "The documents Wang read and collected during his time in Tehran are 100 or more years old," Mr. Kotkin said.

Trita Parsi, the president of the National Iranian American Council, a group that has advocated for improved relations with Iran, also described the accusations against Mr. Wang as ridiculous. "From the evidence made public by Iran's

judiciary against Mr. Wang, it appears that his only crime was to read books at a public library," Mr. Parsi said.

He also said Mr. Wang's prosecution reflected efforts by hard-line opponents of Mr. Rouhani to sabotage his effort to promote interactions with the West.

"This serves to deter those who want to study in the country," he said. "As they see Rouhani having greater success, things like this, precisely because they're so absurd, will have a chilling effect."

Mr. Wang's case also reverberated in Beijing, his birthplace, where he had always shown a penchant for foreign languages.

According to Chinese news media accounts, Mr. Wang went to the United States when he was 19 and studied at the University of Washington and at Harvard

University, focusing on southern Asian languages and religion in Middle Asia.

He became proficient in Pashto, a language spoken in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, and for a time worked as a translator for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where he helped Afghans traumatized by violence and death from the American-led war against the Taliban.

An article titled "Me and the Taliban, Face to Face" about Mr. Wang, posted in 2010 on the Red Cross's Chinese-language website, described Kandahar as "the most dangerous place in the world" for a translator.

The New York Times Trump Recertifies Iran Nuclear Deal, but Only Reluctantly

Peter Baker

WASHINGTON — President Trump agreed on Monday to certify again that Iran is complying with an international nuclear agreement that he has strongly criticized, but only after hours of arguing with his top national security advisers, briefly upending a planned announcement as a legal deadline loomed.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly condemned the deal brokered by President Barack Obama as a dangerous capitulation to Iran, but six months into his presidency he has not abandoned it. The decision on Monday was the second time his administration certified Iran's compliance, and aides said a frustrated Mr. Trump had told his security team that he would not keep doing so indefinitely.

Administration officials announced the certification on Monday evening while emphasizing that they intended to toughen enforcement of the deal, apply new sanctions on Iran for its support of terrorism and other destabilizing activities, and negotiate with European partners to craft a broader strategy to increase pressure on Tehran. Aides said Mr. Trump had insisted on such actions before agreeing to the consensus recommendation of his national security team.

"The president has made very clear that he thought this was a bad deal — a bad deal for the United States," Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, told reporters at a briefing on Monday before the decision was made.

By law, the administration is required to notify Congress every 90 days whether Iran is living up to the deal, which limited its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of many international sanctions. With the latest deadline approaching on Monday, the issue set off a sharp debate between the president and his own team, starting last week, aides said.

At an hourlong meeting last Wednesday, all of the president's major security advisers recommended he preserve the Iran deal for now. Among those who spoke out were Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson; Defense Secretary Jim Mattis; Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, the national security adviser; and Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to an official who described internal discussions on the condition of anonymity. The official said Mr. Trump had spent 55 minutes of the meeting telling them he did not want to.

Mr. Trump did not want to certify Iran's compliance the first time around either, but was talked into it on the condition that his team come back with a new strategy to confront Tehran, the official said. Last week, advisers told the president they needed more time to work with allies and Congress. Mr. Trump responded that before he would go along, they had to meet certain conditions, said the official, who would not outline what the conditions were.

While Mr. Trump headed to Paris and then spent the weekend in New Jersey, his team developed a strategy that it hoped would satisfy

him and planned to notify Congress and make the case publicly on Monday. But even as allies were quietly being informed, Mr. Trump balked when he heard the plan at his morning security briefing, the official said. The argument continued during a separate meeting with Mr. Tillerson as Mr. Trump pressed for more action, the official said.

Suddenly, a background briefing to announce the decision was postponed and Mr. Spicer was sent out to assure reporters that a decision would be coming "very shortly," while aides scrambled to satisfy Mr. Trump. He agreed only late in the day after a final meeting in the Oval Office, in effect telling his advisers that he was giving them another chance and this time they had to deliver. The announcement was then rescheduled for the early evening and a notice was sent to Congress to continue withholding nuclear-related sanctions against Iran.

Under the agreement, the United States can still penalize Iran for behavior such as its development of ballistic missiles or support for terrorism, but it cannot simply reapply the same sanctions that were lifted under a different guise. Iran has the right to appeal to a joint committee and make the argument that the United States is in violation.

European officials have long argued that the agreement was intended only to restrict Iran's nuclear program, not the panoply of other issues. If the international community were to do more to confront Tehran over its efforts to destabilize neighbors in the Middle

East, European officials have said, it would be better to face an Iran without nuclear weapons. They have shown little enthusiasm for revisiting the deal, much less undercutting it.

That Mr. Trump's actions will satisfy conservatives who have been urging him to rip up the Iran deal seemed unlikely. In a column in The Hill, a Capitol Hill newspaper, John R. Bolton, a former ambassador to the United Nations who has interviewed with the president for several jobs in the administration, argued that the nuclear agreement "remains palpably harmful to American national interests." Withdrawing from it, he said, "should be the highest priority."

Israel and its supporters in Washington have also bristled at a new cease-fire in southwest Syria that was brokered by Mr. Trump and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, fearing it will leave Iran as a major player on the ground in the six-year civil war. Mr. Spicer said the administration would address that with Israel. "There's a shared interest that we have with Israel, making sure that Iran does not gain a foothold, military base-wise, in southern Syria," Mr. Spicer said.

Tehran's clerical government argues that Mr. Trump has already violated the nuclear agreement by pressuring businesses not to engage with Iran even though the nuclear sanctions have been lifted. "That is violation of not the spirit but of the letter of the J.C.P.O.A. of the nuclear deal," Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, said on CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS" on Sunday, using the initials for the agreement.

Mr. Zarif, visiting New York, told a gathering of the Council on Foreign Relations on Monday that he has yet to talk with Mr. Tillerson, unlike his frequent conversations with former Secretary of State John Kerry, with whom he negotiated the nuclear accord.

In an interview on Monday with Jacob Heilbrunn, editor of *The National Interest*, a foreign policy journal, Mr. Zarif raised the prospect

that Iran would be the one to back out. "If it comes to a major violation, or what in the terms of the nuclear deal is called significant nonperformance, then Iran has other options available, including withdrawing from the deal," he said.

That would be an outcome welcomed by the Trump administration. Top officials like Mr. Tillerson and Mr. Mattis have expressed concern about the effect

on American relations with European allies if Mr. Trump were to unilaterally pull out, especially after he already announced his intention to back out of the Paris climate change accord that Europeans strongly support.

But some advisers to the president argue that if they can provoke Iran into being the one to scrap the nuclear deal, it will leave the United States in a stronger position.

Mr. Trump has aligned the United States with Sunni Arab states, like Saudi Arabia, as well as Israel in their mutual struggle with Shiite-led Iran over control of the Middle East. His administration has already announced modest new sanctions against Iran, but nothing on the scale of those imposed before the nuclear agreement.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Trump Administration Again Certifies Iran Is Complying With Nuclear Deal

Felicia Schwartz

WASHINGTON—The Trump administration said it notified Congress late Monday that Iran is complying with the international nuclear deal reached two years ago, but the fate of the agreement remains uncertain as it is still under review.

The notification came despite a push by some within the administration to refuse to certify Iran's compliance, people familiar with the deliberations said. That push began around midday and lasted into the evening.

The Trump administration has been reviewing the Iran deal for several months. President Donald Trump has attacked the agreement, reached in 2015, as a "terrible deal" for the U.S.

Despite the certification, the Trump administration will disclose on Tuesday that it is leveling additional sanctions related to Iran's ballistic missile program and other behavior it considers destabilizing, senior administration officials said.

"Iran is unquestionably in default of the spirit of the JCPOA," a senior administration official said Monday evening, using an acronym to refer to the nuclear deal.

The official said the administration intends to pursue a strategy "that will address the totality of Iran's malign behavior and not narrowly focus" on Iran's nuclear program.

A second administration official said the U.S. will be "working with allies to build a case for serious flaws in agreement, while also at the same time looking for ways to more strictly enforce the deal."

Officials said they intend to make sure Iran is complying with a "stricter interpretation" of the deal than that of the Obama administration.

Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, speaking in New York on Monday, said the Trump administration was sending contradictory signals and Iran doesn't know "which to interpret in what way."

Speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations after traveling to the U.S. for a conference at the United Nations this week, he said the accord wasn't an Iran-U.S. deal but a multilateral agreement and Iran had built trust by implementing its side of the bargain.

Mr. Zarif was restrained in his criticism of the Trump administration, while saying additional U.S. sanctions were a violation of the deal. He said the U.S. hasn't done enough to lift sanctions or given a clear answer to businesses that want to invest in Iran.

The Trump administration is particularly concerned about Iran's ballistic missile development, support for what the U.S. considers terrorist groups, support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the arbitrary detention of American citizens, officials said.

Over the weekend, Iran sentenced American academic Xiyue Wang to 10 years in prison on spying charges, the latest in a series of cases against foreigners. There are several other Americans in Iranian custody.

A State Department official said Monday the "allegations against Mr. Wang are baseless, and we call on the Iranian government to release

him immediately so he can be reunited with his family."

Mr. Zarif defended the sentence, saying Iran's judiciary is independent and it must have found evidence of spying to sentence Mr. Wang.

Trump administration officials are skeptical about the 2015 agreement because it only addresses nuclear issues. Obama administration officials have defended that approach, saying Iran would be a greater threat if it possessed nuclear weapons.

The Trump administration faced a Monday congressional deadline to assess whether Tehran is complying with the terms of the accord, which requires Iran to significantly scale back its nuclear capabilities in exchange for sanctions relief. The deadline occurs every three months.

Monday's decision came after hours of talks at the White House involving Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and other officials. Mr. Tillerson backed recertification, while others, including White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, advocated that Mr. Trump shouldn't sign off on compliance.

The people familiar with the deliberations said the Trump administration was considering not certifying Iran's compliance but keeping sanctions relief in place.

Mr. Tillerson last certified compliance in April, but said then that the Trump administration was weighing whether to continue easing sanctions as required by the deal, citing Iran's support for organizations considered by the U.S. to be terrorist groups.

European officials are becoming more wary about the Trump administration's policy review and fear it could undermine the agreement by curbing the economic benefits meant to ensure Iranian compliance.

Obama administration officials, including former Secretary of State John Kerry, encouraged European banks and other companies to do business with Iran to ensure it received economic benefits promised by the deal. In contrast, Mr. Tillerson hasn't spoken with his Iranian counterpart and the Trump administration has transmitted a greater sense of uncertainty about the business climate in Iran.

Mr. Zarif said Monday that while he has had no contact with Mr. Tillerson, future interactions are possible.

European diplomats worry that if the U.S. commitment remains uncertain, Iran may respond by attempting limited violations of the nuclear deal.

Mark Dubowitz, chief executive officer of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and an opponent of the deal, said the administration's statement Monday could forecast tougher measures.

"It's part of a temporary waive and slap strategy, where the administration will waive certain sanctions while slapping on additional measures, but no one should expect this to be an ongoing strategy for much longer," Mr. Dubowitz said.

—Farnaz Fassihi contributed to this article.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Afghanistan's Capital More Dangerous Than Helmand Province, U.N. Says

Jessica Donati

KABUL—More civilians were killed and wounded in Kabul during the

first six months of 2017 than in war-ravaged Helmand, according to a United Nations midyear report on civilian casualties that showed

deaths and injuries in Afghanistan remained near record levels documented last year.

A rise in large-scale militant attacks in Kabul have had a profoundly destabilizing effect on the capital, where some roads are still locked

down and some embassies have scaled back to skeleton staff after a massive truck bomb struck near the diplomatic enclave in May.

The U.N. Assistance Mission to Afghanistan documented 5,243 civilian casualties across the country, including 1,662 dead and 3,581 wounded over the period, a decrease of less than 1% from last year, the report released Monday said. This included a 2% rise in civilian deaths and a 1% decline in injuries.

The trend reflects the growing influence of the Taliban insurgency in rural areas, which has provided a bigger foothold and more recruits for it to carry out large-scale attacks targeting workers at rush hour in central Kabul and other major cities.

The U.N. said civilian casualties in Kabul were almost twice as high as in Helmand, which is mostly under

Taliban control and has long considered the country's most violent province. There were 1,048 civilian casualties in Kabul province over the period, including 219 deaths and 829 injured, a 26% increase from last year, the U.N. said.

The rising urban toll could fuel concerns over plans by the European Union to deport Afghan migrants back home on the basis that some parts of Afghanistan, including Kabul, were safe enough for them to return. Around 200,000 Afghans arrived on the continent in 2015 in an effort to escape their country's ongoing conflict, according to the EU, and tens of thousands followed last year.

Helmand, which is mostly under Taliban controlled, recorded the highest number of deaths, the report said. The U.S. military has sent more than 300 Marines to Helmand

to help Afghan forces keep the provincial capital from falling to the insurgency, amid heavy daily clashes there.

The U.N. report also showed a 23% rise in female casualties this year, including 174 women dead and 462 injured, and a rise in child deaths, which rose 9% to 436.

Also in the first half of 2017, a rise in casualties linked to bombings weighed against a decline in those caused by clashes between government forces and insurgents, the U.N. report said. It attributed the drop to efforts by the army and police to exercise greater caution in using weapons that cause high casualties, including mortars.

The deadliest attack in Kabul since 2001 struck on May 31, as a massive truck bomb exploded just outside Kabul's heavily-fortified diplomatic enclave, killing more than

150 people—mainly Afghan civilians on their way to work.

It triggered a wave of protests by locals angry about the government's failure to protect them, and more deaths in clashes with security forces, which contributed to frustration with the government beset by internal rivalry and entrenched corruption.

Afghan and security officials from the international military coalition in the country are reviewing new security plans for Kabul. They include a dramatic expansion of the diplomatic enclave, known as the Green Zone, that would reduce the exposure of government and embassy buildings to city roads, a move that would further limit those officials' interaction with the local population.

**The
Washington
Post**

Cohen : Could mercenaries end America's longest war?

Shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, I differed with a friend who said I was wrong to support an invasion of Afghanistan to root out al-Qaeda and punish the Taliban. I said the United States had no choice but to make the terrorists and their Afghan hosts pay for what they had done. I insisted I was right. That, amazingly, was almost 16 years ago. I never expected to be right for so long.

Afghanistan has become the war without end. The United States cannot win it and cannot afford to lose it. The country consumes American wealth and lives. More than 2,300 American soldiers have died there. Some \$828 billion has been spent there. Generals who once commanded there are deep into their retirement, and soldiers who fought there as youths are approaching middle age. Kipling's Brits could not control the country; neither could the Russians nor, come to think of it, can the Afghans. Afghanistan is not a country. It's a chronic disease.

The Trump administration, like the several that preceded it — George W. Bush twice and Barack Obama twice — is mulling a new approach. This time, there will be no certain

date when American involvement will end — a bit of Obama-era silliness that, in effect, told the Taliban to hold on, be patient, and the Yanks will leave. President Trump has reportedly left decisions on troop levels to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, a retired Marine general and a man of such reckless courage that he refused to fawn over Trump at a Cabinet meeting. Somewhere a medal awaits.

Evening Edition newsletter

The day's most important stories.

Mattis, however, is reportedly cool to a plan developed by Erik Prince that would entail turning over a substantial part of the Afghanistan effort to "contracted European professional soldiers" — what you and I call mercenaries. The term has an odious connotation, but there is no avoiding it. Prince is referring to British, French, Spanish and other Europeans who are experienced soldiers. They would not, as is now the case with Americans, be rotated out of the country after a period of time to the effect that, in a sense, the United States is always starting anew. These contract soldiers would get about \$600 a day to command

Afghan troops and be embedded with them — much as U.S. Special Operations forces now are. Trouble is, the United States has a limited number of those forces.

I took the phrase "contracted European professional soldiers" from an op-ed Prince wrote for the Wall Street Journal. It seems the president read it and was intrigued. Good. The plan has its virtues, the most obvious one being that nothing else has worked — and more of the same is going to produce more of the same. The plan also has its difficulties, one of them being its provenance. Prince is the founder of the highly controversial security firm Blackwater, which he has since sold. While he owned it, though, some of its employees opened fire in Baghdad's Nisour Square, killing 17 civilians and wounding more than 20.

If Prince remains controversial, he also remains influential. He's a former Navy SEAL who has entry to the White House and the CIA, and his sister is Betsy DeVos, the education secretary. Like his sister, Prince is rich and indefatigable. He has been peddling his Afghanistan plan for more than a year, and while it is frequently described with the pejorative term "for profit," it has, as

Prince contends, a pedigree. "Contract Europeans" were used by the British East India Company to rule India for more than 100 years.

Prince's references to colonial rule are admiring. He has even revived the term "viceroy" to describe the person who would direct American policy in Afghanistan. By his count, the United States has had 17 military commanders in the past 15 years — not counting ambassadors, CIA station chiefs and, of course, the inevitable special representatives, such as Richard Holbrooke, whose genius and energy were wasted by Obama. All that would stop. The viceroy would run things.

The war in Afghanistan is the longest in American history. A loss would allow the country to revert to a terrorist haven. A win would require a commitment in manpower that the United States is not willing to make. In almost 16 years, the fight in Afghanistan has gone from noble cause to onerous obligation. I don't know if Prince has the answer, but he has come up with one way to sustain the fight at less cost in American lives and treasure. Will it work? I don't know, but nothing else has.

**The
Washington
Post**

Editorial : More than 20 million people are at risk of starving to death. Will the world step up?

MORE THAN 20 million people in four countries are at risk of starvation in the coming months, in what the United Nations has called the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. But the

global response to the emergency has been lacking, both from governments and from private citizens. As of Monday, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was reporting

that only 43 percent of the \$6.27 billion needed to head off famine this year in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria had been raised. A poll by the International Rescue Committee showed that 85

percent of Americans are largely uninformed about the food shortages. The IRC calls it "likely the least reported but most important major issue of our time."

Accounts by the United Nations, the U.S. government and private aid groups more than back up that claim. More than half the populations of Somalia and South Sudan are in need of emergency food assistance, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Civil wars in those countries have combined with meager spring rains to drastically reduce food supplies. In Nigeria, some 5 million people are at risk in the northeastern provinces where the terrorist group Boko Haram is active.

The most harrowing reports come from Yemen, where the United Nations says a staggering 20 million people need humanitarian aid. In addition to millions who lack food, more than 330,000 people have

been afflicted by a cholera epidemic since late April, with one person dying nearly every hour on average. Donors have supplied less than 40 percent of the aid Yemen needs to prevent starvation, and officials have recently been forced to divert some of that assistance to fight cholera. In all four countries, children are disproportionately affected: Aid groups say 1.4 million severely malnourished children could die in the next few months if more help is not forthcoming.

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

The United States has responded relatively generously to U.N. appeals, thanks largely to Congress,

**The
Washington
Post**

Gerson : A look inside the unfolding nightmare in Somalia

Michael Gerson

Act Four newsletter

This town was liberated from the control of al-Shabab (an Islamist insurgent group) five years ago. But "liberated" is a relative term. The security bubble created by the presence of U.N. and Ethiopian military forces reaches less than 10 miles outside of town, leaving just a short hike to terrorist land. Women I met in line at a clinic had come from al-Shabab-occupied territory that morning. The insurgency forbids medical treatment from the government, so women must sneak in and out of town for prenatal care. If they are caught with their blue medical-record cards, al-Shabab imposes fines or worse.

In sophisticated propaganda videos, the Islamist insurgency claims to have a working, parallel government, with schools and medical facilities. When I mentioned this to Somalis, they laughed. Al-Shabab is best at taxing movement and businesses, conducting targeted assassinations, and importing al-Qaeda bomb experts. Last year, a double bombing in Baidoa killed more than 30 people. In 2015, fighters wearing Somali army uniforms breached the Baidoa green zone and killed several people across from the compound where I wrote this column.

The intersection of culture and politics.

Most of the men you encounter in the street are armed, and travel outside of town requires a small platoon of guards. The periodic gunshots you hear are disconcerting but usually indicate weddings and other celebrations. "It means someone is happy," I was told.

The relative stability of the town attracts IDPs (internally displaced persons) fleeing from famine-like conditions caused by three years of inadequate rains, further complicated by conflict. More than 700,000 Somalis — well over half of them children — have left their homes due to the drought. At one IDP camp, I spoke with a woman who had all her food and money confiscated at al-Shabab checkpoints. I spoke with a woman who started her trek with six children and ended with four — the other two taken by cholera, which can kill within hours.

Somalia generally gets bad press, focused on starvation, terrorism or piracy. But it's not a country composed mainly of hungry Islamist pirates. It is a country in the midst of re-founding itself. It recently elected a promising new president, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who has Somali/American dual citizenship and once worked for the New York State Department of Transportation in Buffalo. But

which inserted an extra \$990 million in food aid for the four countries into this year's budget. Aid officials complain that the Trump administration has been sluggish in distributing the funds, but this month USAID announced an additional \$630 million in aid, bringing the U.S. total since November to \$1.9 billion. Unfortunately, U.S. security policy is helping to exacerbate the crisis that the aid is meant to stem: In Yemen, the Pentagon continues to back a misguided military intervention led by Saudi Arabia that has choked imports of food and medicine.

With public awareness still lagging, one encouraging development has been the formation by eight large U.S. private relief organizations of an unprecedented alliance, the Global Emergency Response

Coalition, which on Monday launched a two-week fundraising drive. The campaign has attracted backing from several U.S. corporations, including Blackrock, PepsiCo and Google; funds raised will be divided equally among the relief groups and used for aid in the four countries as well as six of their neighbors. The groups correctly make the point that further delays in aid, whether because of a lack of donations or bureaucratic slowness in distributing them, will translate directly into more avoidable deaths. "The crisis," says Carolyn Miles, the chief executive of Save the Children, "is really reaching a peak."

Mohamed is now under considerable pressure to produce tangible social and military results.

The Trump administration is correct to insist that, in cases such as this, hard power is foundational. There is no sustained development in a state of nature, the war of all against all. So U.S. drones fly over Somalia and the United States helps train the Somali military. There are rumors that Mohamed may soon undertake a military offensive as a show of strength.

But any rational account of American interests must also include the well-being of the Somali people. More than 3 million Somalis — about one-fourth of the population — are in critical need of help. Poverty and despair do not cause terrorism, but they can contribute to the failure of states, which provides the chaos in which terrorism thrives. Somalia is exhibit A. And conditions are about to get worse. If the drought continues, hundreds of thousands more Somalis will flood places like Baidoa, and tens of thousands of children will be at imminent risk of death from starvation.

The time-compressed disasters — events such as earthquakes and hurricanes — tend to result in concentrated generosity. But a slowly unfolding nightmare is no less frightening. Across South Sudan, northern Nigeria, Yemen and Somalia, we are hearing not urgent

shouts, but gradually fading voices. This is one horrifying aspect of meeting severely malnourished children in Baidoa's hot, crowded, reeking hospital ward. Some are too weak even to cry, and their quiet bleat may be the saddest sound I have ever heard.

There is little question that the already generous response of the United States and other donors will need to be stepped up even further. But those who find that statement ideologically objectionable — those who believe that our government shouldn't respond in this fashion — can still show their generosity to private and religious groups doing front-line work in the region. (A place to start is the Hunger Relief Fund sponsored by PepsiCo, Google, Twitter and others at globalemergencyresponse.org. One of the groups in this consortium, World Vision, sponsored my visit.)

It is difficult to describe the scale of Somali suffering — a quarter of the population wrestling with hunger and despair. These people require more than a flash of empathy. They need empathy and action as sustained and implacable as the drought itself.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Moscow Threatens Retaliatory Moves as U.S., Russian Officials Hold Talks

Nathan Hodge in Moscow and Paul Sonne in Washington

Moscow turned up the rhetorical heat against the U.S. on Monday as

high-ranking U.S. and Russian officials met in Washington amid a continuing dispute over American allegations that the Kremlin

interfered with the 2016 presidential election.

The Obama administration, in response to Russia's alleged

meddling in the election, late last year expelled 35 Russians it said were intelligence operatives serving under diplomatic cover. The State

Department also denied Russian diplomats access to two Russian government-owned compounds in the U.S.

Speaking to reporters Monday in Minsk, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called the closing of the compounds “theft in broad daylight, just highway robbery.”

The accusation came hours before scheduled talks between Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas Shannon.

The State Department didn't immediately comment on the outcome of the meeting between Messrs. Ryabkov and Shannon. The White House declined to comment

at a news briefing, referring questions to the State Department.

Russian-U.S. relations have been in an abysmal state since Moscow's seizure of the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea in 2014 from Ukraine. But Mr. Lavrov on Monday extended an olive branch to the Trump White House, blaming the retaliatory diplomatic measures on the Obama administration, which he said was trying to destroy U.S.-Russia relations. The Trump administration has pledged to try to restore them.

After the Obama administration introduced sanctions over the U.S. election, Russian President Vladimir Putin elected not to expel U.S. diplomats. But Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria

Zakharova recently hinted that Russia might take retaliatory measures against the U.S. diplomatic mission in Moscow.

Ahead of the Washington meeting, Russian state television gave heavy play to the subject of the diplomatic compounds, with legal commentator Gasan Mirzoyev telling channel state TV broadcaster Rossiya 24 that he was “absolutely sure that our side will take adequate steps in response” if the Russians are not granted access to the compounds.

Earlier this month, three U.S. Senators—two Republicans and one Democrat—sent a letter to President Donald Trump urging the White House not to return the compounds to Russia.

“The return of these two facilities to Russia while the Kremlin refuses to address its influence campaign against the United States would embolden President Vladimir Putin and invite a dangerous escalation in the Kremlin's destabilizing actions against democracies world-wide,” wrote Sens. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.), Jeanne Shaheen (D., N.H.) and Johnny Isakson (R., Ga.).

The U.S. senators said that while they understood the larger goal of seeking cooperation with Russia, “we have seen the limits of Russia's willingness to work the United States time and time again.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Unable to Buy U.S. Military Drones, Allies Place Orders With China (UNE)

Jeremy Page in Beijing and Paul Sonne in Washington

Last October, satellite images captured the distinctive outlines of some powerful new weaponry at a Saudi runway used for military strikes in Yemen. Three Wing Loong drones had appeared, Chinese-made replicas of the U.S. Predator with a similar ability to stay aloft for hours carrying missiles and bombs.

The same month, another Chinese military drone, the CH-4 Rainbow, appeared in a photo of an airstrip in Jordan near the Syrian border. Other commercial satellite images have since revealed Chinese strike and surveillance drones at bases used by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

These images and others now being scrutinized in international defense circles add to growing evidence that military drones exported by China have recently been deployed in conflicts in the Mideast and Africa by several countries, including U.S. allies that the U.S. blocked from buying American models.

For the U.S., that is a strategic and commercial blow.

The U.S. has long refused to sell the most powerful U.S.-made drones to most countries, fearing they might fall into hostile hands, be used to suppress civil unrest or, in the Mideast, erode Israel's military dominance. The U.K. is the only foreign country that has operated armed Predators and Reapers, the most potent U.S. systems for offensive drone strikes, according to people familiar with U.S. sales.

The Obama administration, while seeking to facilitate exports under close regulation, led efforts to forge a global “drone code” that would

curb proliferation and keep the weapons from misuse.

But China is filling the void. State companies are selling aircraft resembling General Atomics's Predator and Reaper drones at a fraction of the cost to U.S. allies and partners, and to other buyers.

China's sales have enabled multiple countries—including some with weak legal systems and scant public oversight of the military—to use unmanned aerial vehicles to spy and kill remotely as the U.S. has done on a large scale since 9/11.

Among the Pentagon's concerns is that advanced drones could be used against American forces. In Syria, U.S. pilots have shot down two Iranian-made armed drones threatening members of the U.S.-led coalition.

U.S. export policy that is driving partners to buy Chinese “hurts U.S. strategic interests in so many ways,” said Paul Scharre, a former Pentagon official at the nonpartisan Center for a New American Security. “It damages the U.S. relationship with a close partner. It increases that partner's relationship with a competitor nation, China. It hurts U.S. companies trying to compete.”

China's drone exports are now starting to influence U.S. policy, as American manufacturers and politicians lobby the Trump administration to relax export controls to stop China from expanding market share and undermining U.S. alliances.

The White House National Security Council is reviewing the drone-export process with the goal to “wherever possible” remove obstacles to American companies'

ability to compete, a senior Trump administration official said.

“We are attuned to what China is doing,” the official said.

Thomas Bossert, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, emphasized the effort to balance economics and security. The administration seeks to help U.S. industry while advancing strategic objectives, he said, including “a deliberate approach to our technology sales policy and the protections we put in place to avoid imperiling innocent lives.”

China, meanwhile, has its sights on another milestone: building military drones in the Mideast. In March, Chinese and Saudi officials agreed to jointly produce as many as 100 Rainbow drones in Saudi Arabia, including a larger, longer-range version called the CH-5, according to people involved.

Shi Wen, the chief designer of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp.'s Rainbow, said earlier versions of the aircraft had been exported to the Mideast, Africa and Asia and were proved “on the battlefield,” hitting 300 targets in the previous year or so with Chinese laser-guided missiles.

“Our main competitors? The Americans, of course,” Li Yidong, chief designer of the Wing Loong, which is built by Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group, said in November at China's biggest air and defense show, in the southern city of Zhuhai.

Behind him, a video screen played animated clips depicting a drone strike on a terrorist base, set to a thumping soundtrack. Nearby, miniskirted models posed with laser-guided missiles.

China's government and drone manufacturers declined to reveal who bought the aircraft. The foreign ministry said Beijing requires strict user agreements—offering no details—and ensures that its arms sales do no harm to regional peace and stability.

“China is paying high attention to the question of the use and export of armed drones,” it said. Authorities from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the U.A.E. and Jordan declined to comment.

China began exporting strike-enabled drones around 2014-2015, heralding a new phase in its arms industry as a global competitor that can influence conflicts and alliances world-wide.

Beijing used to sell mainly low-tech arms to poorer countries; now it is marketing sophisticated items including stealth fighters, and targeting markets once dominated by Russia and the U.S. Sales help Beijing gain leverage in areas where its economic interests are expanding, adding muscle to President Xi Jinping's drive to establish his country as a global power.

China is now the world's third-biggest arms seller by value, behind the U.S. at No. 1 and Russia, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI.

Maintaining such a ranking depends in large part on demand for China's armed drones, which China has sold to countries including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the U.A.E., the Pentagon said in a report in June.

“China faces little competition for sale of such systems, as most countries that produce them are

restricted in selling the technology” by international agreements, it said.

Key among those agreements limiting American sales is the 1987 Missile Technology Control Regime, signed by 35 nations including the U.S., but not China. The MTCR limits exports based on an unmanned system’s range and how much it can carry—putting tight restrictions on the most powerful American drones.

In 2015, the Obama administration issued new export rules that tried to enable drone exports if buyers agreed to use them in line with international human-rights law.

The rules grew in part from the administration’s expansion of drone operations in places such as Afghanistan. The growth spurred concerns about the lawfulness of killings outside combat areas and the ethics of remote-control warfare—including the targeting of Americans, such as al Qaeda’s Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen in 2011.

In an effort to address legal uncertainty and the global precedent it was setting, the Obama administration sought to develop a framework for how governments use such weapons.

In October, after months of U.S. lobbying, 45 countries signed the world’s first joint declaration on the export and use of armed or strike-enabled aerial drones. The declaration said misuse of such drones could “fuel conflict and instability” and urged exporters to be transparent about sales and ensure buyers observed laws of war.

In the Mideast, only Jordan and Iraq endorsed the statement.

China didn’t sign. Its foreign ministry said the issue was “complicated” and related to “cross-border strikes” as well as exports. It noted that other drone producers didn’t sign last year’s

declaration and deeper talks were needed.

Some of the declaration’s proponents worry that several states could relax export rules to compete with China. “This would be a drone-against-drone world driven by profits, not protection of civilians,” said Wim Zwijnenburg, a disarmament campaigner for the Dutch group PAX who participated in negotiations on enhancing the declaration. He said China’s sales could fuel regional tensions as states act across borders—which can be done with drones at lower cost and less risk to personnel.

The Pentagon estimates China could produce almost 42,000 aerial drones—sale value more than \$10 billion—in the decade up to 2023.

Beijing’s drone program began with old Soviet designs; more recently, U.S. officials say, China used espionage and open-source material to reverse-engineer U.S. drones. Beijing denies that.

U.S. armed drones are still overwhelmingly considered the most capable, in part because the U.S. satellite infrastructure that controls them is superior. Israel has been the top military-drone exporter for years, according to SIPRI. But Israel has largely avoided selling them in its own Mideast neighborhood.

A Wing Loong, meanwhile, costs about \$1 million compared with about \$5 million for its U.S.-made counterpart, the Predator, and about \$15 million for a Reaper, whose Chinese competition is the CH-5.

Buyers welcome the chance to buy relatively cheap weapons that they say come with fewer restrictions than Western equivalents. Promotional materials from China suggest it has sold Rainbows or Wing Loongs to at least 10 countries.

At the same time, the Ministry of Unification, which oversees Seoul’s ties with Pyongyang, called for the two Koreas to restart reunions of families separated during the Korean War and reiterated a desire for an end to hostilities between the two sides.

“If South and North sit down face to face, we will be able to frankly discuss issues of mutual concern,” said Cho Myoung-gyon, the new unification minister, at a news conference on Monday.

North Korea didn’t immediately respond through its state media to the proposals, but it has dismissed Mr. Moon’s previous suggestions for

Satellite imagery viewed by The Wall Street Journal shows Chinese strike and surveillance drones have been used by Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. in the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen.

After the Obama administration rebuffed a request from the U.A.E. for shoot-to-kill drones, the Emiratis bought Chinese surveillance drones and equipped them with South African laser targeting systems, according to Danny Sebright, a former Pentagon official and president of the U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council. The U.A.E. has used them to guide missiles from planes for strikes in Yemen, he said.

In Libya, the U.A.E. is using Chinese drones to help support a general who opposes the United Nations-backed government in Tripoli, satellite images indicate. They also show that Egypt’s military is deploying Chinese drones in the Sinai Peninsula in its campaign against Islamist militants.

A North Korean drone that crashed in South Korea in 2014 was Chinese-made, according to a U.N. report. Iraq last year published video of its missile attacks on Islamic State from a Chinese drone, and Nigeria issued footage of a strike by a Chinese drone on the Boko Haram insurgency. An official with Iraq’s Joint Operations Command said Iraq has used the Chinese-made CH-4 Rainbow. A Nigerian Air Force spokesman said Nigeria was using CH-3 Rainbows procured from China.

U.S. manufacturers, and their political backers, argue that Washington can no longer prevent drone proliferation.

Weapons makers have been buoyed by President Donald Trump’s statements of support for U.S. manufacturing and for a \$110 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia that includes some items that were

blocked by the Obama administration. The administration in June approved the sale to India of 22 Guardian drones, an unarmed maritime version of the Reaper.

Bart Roper, executive vice president of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc., said the U.S. is ceding the drone market to Chinese and others “due to obsolete and arbitrary restrictions.”

He expressed hope the Trump administration would revise policy to better promote U.S. industry.

In April, 22 members of Congress—led by Rep. Duncan Hunter, who represents the San Diego district not far from where General Atomics is based—asked the administration to approve Reaper exports to Jordan and the U.A.E. They argued that the Arab allies in the fight against Islamic State are buying Chinese drones instead, and that export approval would save U.S. jobs.

In recent months, China has unveiled larger, longer-range drones and tested radar-evading stealth models, according to state media. It has also expanded its marketing, displaying its drones for the first time in Mexico in April and in France in June.

At the Chinese air show in November, two uniformed Saudi officers inspected a CH-5 Rainbow—the model most similar to the Reaper—displayed publicly for the first time. “It’s amazing,” said one. “This thing can stay up for more than 24 hours.”

The CH-5 can in fact operate for up to 40 hours, its manufacturer says—about 50% longer than its American competition.

—Asa Fitch in Dubai and Yang Jie in Beijing contributed to this article.



South Korea Formally Proposes Talks With the North

Jonathan Cheng

SEOUL—The administration of South Korean President Moon Jae-in made its first formal offer to start talks with North Korea, following through on a policy plank of Seoul’s first left-leaning president in nearly a decade.

South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense proposed on Monday a meeting with its counterpart on Friday at Panmunjom, the truce village where the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War was signed, to discuss ways to lower tensions between the two sides.

a restart to dialogue between the two Koreas.

Beijing, an ally of Pyongyang’s, voiced support for Seoul’s proposal. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said the effort is a step toward improving relations between the Koreas and easing regional tensions.

“We hope the two sides will move in a positive direction to create the conditions to break the stalemate and relaunch dialogue and negotiations,” the spokesman, Lu Kang, said at a media briefing in Beijing.

The dual proposals on Monday underscore Mr. Moon’s commitment to seeking engagement with Pyongyang as a way to lower tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Mr. Moon, a liberal who favors dialogue with North Korea, was sworn into office in May following the impeachment and removal of his conservative predecessor, Park Geun-hye.

Mr. Moon’s more dovish stance contrasts with the approach of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has ramped up tough language against North Korea since coming to office and threatened “some pretty severe

things" in response to the regime's weapons tests.

A U.S. Embassy official said Monday the U.S. continues to coordinate closely with Seoul on North Korea.

Since Mr. Moon's inauguration, North Korea has tested a series of missiles with new capabilities and earlier this month test-launched its first intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching parts of the U.S.

Even while condemning the North's missile test and ordering a joint missile-launch drill with the U.S. on the Korean Peninsula the following day, Mr. Moon

hasn't given up on dialogue.

Just days after North Korea's July 4 ICBM test-launch, Mr. Moon delivered a speech in Berlin calling for greater rapprochement with North Korea, including the proposals that were formally made on Monday.

In the speech, Mr. Moon also called for a summit meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "at any time, at any place," providing certain conditions were met. He has also called for cooperation between the two Koreas at the Winter Olympics next year, which will be hosted by South Korea.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Derek Scissors

After decades of diplomacy in Korea, it is clear there is no deal to strike. Kim Jong Un wants to reunify the Korean Peninsula under his rule and eject America from the region. North Korea's actions since the first nuclear crisis, more than two decades ago, show this is not mere talk. The regime has used every agreement for 20 years to build more weapons and extort more money. Mr. Kim is close to having a nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missile, threatening the U.S. and its allies. The only solution is to remove him. But how?

A war would be extremely costly. The better choice—though still not an easy one—is to put serious pressure on China to cut off its trade with North Korea. At the same time, the U.S. should make clear it is open to working with Beijing to replace Mr. Kim with a regime willing to forgo weapons of mass destruction.

The coercion of China should be two-pronged. First, the U.S. should further tighten its alliance with Japan and South Korea, forcing Beijing to reckon with its encirclement in Northeast Asia. For China, a well-armed, interlinked Northeast alliance system is a strategic catastrophe.

The New York Times

Sanger

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea on Monday proposed holding military and humanitarian talks with North Korea, its first visible split with the Trump administration, which has said it will deal with North Korea's continued missile tests by stepping

Blumenthal and Scissors: Forcing China's Hand on North Korea

Daniel Blumenthal and

But the real change would be to move from pinprick sanctions on Chinese companies doing business with North Korea to economic coercion. North Korea is already effectively under a global embargo—with one glaring exception. Pyongyang's trade with China—which accounts for 90% of its total trade—has increased in recent years, customs data show.

North Korea receives almost all its imports from China, including oil products. Chinese minerals feed Pyongyang's industrial and military production. Payments sent for North Korean seafood and textiles serve the same purpose.

Rising trade is no accident. China and North Korea have recently created shipping and modern rail routes to boost trade. The Guomenwan border trade zone that opened in October 2015 in Dandong, China, was established to promote bilateral economic links. These moves mock the United Nations sanctions to which China has pledged fidelity.

This obviously undermines U.S. interests, and it is time to respond meaningfully. A few companies that do business with North Korea are under international sanctions, but this imposes little cost on China. Often companies cease their activity (or disappear entirely), and new ones arise to replace them.

During the Berlin speech, Mr. Moon said he had secured Mr. Trump's support for Seoul to take the initiative in reopening inter-Korean dialogue following their White House summit meeting late last month.

Over the weekend, North Korea's Rodong Sinmun newspaper dismissed Mr. Moon's Berlin speech as "nonsensical sophism putting a brake on the efforts for achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula."

The speech's "overall contents are run through with an ill intention to escalate confrontation with the compatriots in the north and stifle them with the backing of outsiders,"

the Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary, according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

Earlier this month, North Korea chastised Mr. Moon for condemning, rather than celebrating, Pyongyang's ICBM test-launch.

North Korea also rejected an earlier offer by the Moon administration to restart family reunions, demanding that the South first agree to turn over a group of North Korean restaurant workers who defected to Seoul last year. Pyongyang says they were kidnapped by the South.

True sanctions would go further. It's a sham to pick out individual Chinese enterprises for sanctions as if they are independent of the government. The Communist Party can control the economy. Many Chinese companies are simply interchangeable tools, used by the party at different times for different purposes.

The West should not play China's shell game. Beijing should not be allowed to effectively determine who is subjected to sanctions for North Korean links, as if these are rogue entities that have nothing to do with the party-state. One Chinese state bank should not be allowed to do global business while another suborns North Korea.

The correct targets are the huge state-owned sisters of the entities doing business with North Korea, those with sizable international business and assets. When it comes to China's support for North Korea, there is little difference between, say, one state-sponsored metals firm and another. Don't impose sanctions only on Limac Corp. for its supposed venture in the North; put them also on Minmetals, the dominant firm and a major global presence. Don't stop at penalizing Dalian Global Unity Shipping as if it's separate from the Chinese state; target kingpin China Ocean Shipping. Don't subject Bank of Dandong to sanctions without also

targeting the behemoth Industrial and Commercial Bank of China .

This is what a serious attempt to change Chinese behavior would look like. It would put enormous pressure on the Communist Party to relieve the pain inflicted on Chinese elites. Such economic coercion has not been tried because it is risky. If sanctions actually begin to hurt China, Beijing will retaliate before it cooperates. The recently announced Sino-American beef deal will be first in the firing line, along with U.S. exports of soybeans, aircraft and other goods and services. Many will fret that the U.S. is causing instability. But Americans have to choose: Is economic tension with China as bad as a nuclear-armed North Korea?

Or is North Korea a "clear and present danger," as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has said? If so, all means short of war should be used to depose Mr. Kim. The tension with China needn't be permanent: Sanctions would vanish if China helps remove the Kim regime and works toward a peaceful peninsula. The other option is to live with a nuclear-armed Kim Jong Un.

Mr. Blumenthal is director of Asian studies and Mr. Scissors a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

South Korea Proposes Military Talks With North at Their Border (UNE)

Choe Sang-Hun and David E.

up sanctions and military pressure on the country.

If the talks take place, they will be the first military-to-military dialogue since 2014. It is an attempt to ease tensions along a heavily armed border, and perhaps to arrange the resumption of reunions of families divided decades ago by the Korean War. But North Korea did not immediately respond, and such

conversations have a dismal history since military officials on both sides are usually not empowered to negotiate significant agreements.

Nonetheless, the reaction of the North will be the first test of the pro-dialogue policy of South Korea's liberal new president, Moon Jae-in, who argues that talks are the likeliest way to end the crisis over

Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program.

When Mr. Moon met with President Trump in Washington at the end of June, they glided past the question of holding direct conversations with the North Korean government. But during the United States' presidential campaign last year, Mr. Trump held open the possibility of talking directly to North Korea's

leader, Kim Jong-un, over a hamburger.

In a statement, the National Security Council said the United States was not opposed to the talks but did not think the time was right.

"We are aware of the reports and refer you to the Republic of Korea," the statement said. "The United States remains open to credible talks on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However, conditions must change before there is any scope for talks to resume."

The statement repeated the requirement that the North must abandon its nuclear and missile programs, which Mr. Kim has said he will never do because they are his guarantee against an American-led effort to topple North Korea's government.

The South hoped to send a military delegation to the border village of Panmunjom on Friday to discuss "stopping all hostile activities that raise military tension" along the border, Vice Defense Minister Suh Choo-suk said on Monday.

Mr. Kim proposed such talks in a May 2016 speech. But Park Geun-hye, a conservative president of South Korea who has since been impeached and removed from office, rejected the offer, calling it insincere and demanding that the North first move toward dismantling its nuclear

weapons program.

Mr. Moon reaffirmed his commitment to dialogue in a speech in Berlin this month, days after Pyongyang conducted its first test of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

The South's outreach comes as the United States is reviewing its economic, military and covert options to deal with the North Korean threat.

After trying to persuade China to intervene more heavily, Mr. Trump has suggested that the United States will go its own way, and that effort seems quite likely to begin with new sanctions on small Chinese financial institutions that do business with North Korea. Chinese trade with the North has increased over the past year, even as Beijing has said it is complying with United Nations sanctions on specific transactions, including the importation of coal.

At the same time, the United States has bolstered its naval presence off the Korean Peninsula and continued cyberattacks aimed at slowing the North's missile testing. But it is not clear whether that effort, which seemed to enjoy some success between 2014 and 2016, is still fruitful.

Mr. Suh, the South's vice defense minister, proposed on Monday that the North restore a military hotline

that Pyongyang cut off in 2016 amid tensions after its nuclear test in January of that year. Without the hotline, the two militaries have no means of communicating quickly and directly to avoid an unintended conflict.

South Korea did not disclose what it wanted to discuss if military talks were held. In past meetings, North Korea has demanded that the South stop holding joint military exercises with the United States and end the use of loudspeakers to broadcast propaganda along the border. South Korea has recently accused the North of sending military drones to spy on the South, an issue that Seoul would quite likely raise.

Also on Monday, the South Korean Red Cross Society proposed an Aug. 1 meeting at Panmunjom with its North Korean counterpart to arrange reunions of relatives in the North and South who have not seen each other since being separated in the 1950s during the Korean War.

Those reunions, which have been held occasionally over the years, are a highly emotional issue and are widely seen as a barometer of inter-Korean relations. Mr. Moon said in his Berlin speech that the reunions should resume.

The last such meetings were held in 2015, when fewer than 100 older Koreans from each side were allowed to spend three days with

their family members. About 60,000 South Koreans are still hoping for a chance to see spouses, siblings and parents across the border before they die. More than half of them are in their 80s or older.

North Korea has said it will not allow another round of reunions unless the South sends 12 North Korean waitresses back to the country. South Korea has said that the women, who worked at a North Korean restaurant in China, chose to defect to the South with their manager last year, but Pyongyang accused the South of kidnapping them.

Pyongyang has also demanded the return of Kim Ryen-hi, a North Korean defector in the South who has said she made a mistake and wants to go back. South Korea has said there are no legal grounds for sending her back to the North.

The United Nations Security Council is discussing a new set of sanctions against North Korea over its intercontinental ballistic missile test. The North has warned that such a move would lead to unspecified retaliatory measures, which analysts said might include another nuclear or long-range missile test.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Editorial : Lula and Brazil's Progress

The forever-developing nation of Brazil has been putting its legal system to an extreme stress test, impeaching one former president, indicting the current one, and late last week convicting former President Lula da Silva of corruption even as he plans to run for the office again.

So far the rule of law is winning, but Lula may be its sternest test. The champion of Brazil's left who served two terms as president from 2003-2011 was convicted for money laundering and corruption and sentenced to nearly 10 years in prison. Judge Sergio Moro ruled that Lula had steered government contracts to the

Brazilian construction firm OAS in exchange for roughly \$1.2 million in bribes in the form of a refurbished beach-front apartment.

Lula's Workers Party allies are howling that he was framed by his political enemies, but everything about the decision suggests the opposite. Mr. Moro's prosecutors have spent three years in a painstaking investigation that has uncovered a vast network of government graft emanating from the giant government-owned oil company Petrobras, whose contracts were steered by Lula.

Scores of Brazilian businessmen and politicians have been caught in the net. And it is Mr. Moro's

willingness to follow the case where it led, including to a popular former head of state, that breaks new ground for the young democracy. "It's lamentable that a president of the republic is criminally convicted," Mr. Moro said. "No matter how important you are, no one is above the law." Investors voted on the Lula verdict by bidding up stocks and Brazil's currency on the news.

This is real progress for South America's largest economy and a cause for optimism despite the immediate turmoil. The great flaw most developing countries share is a weak rule of law. Brazil has spent lavishly trying to become an industrial giant by subsidizing and sheltering from competition large

state-owned enterprises like Petrobras. But it has been slow to nurture an independent judiciary, and Mr. Moro's determination to pursue political corruption is encouraging.

Lula says he is innocent and will appeal, and in the meantime he is free and expected to launch a new bid for the presidency. Should he win next year before the appeal is concluded, the sentence and legal appeal would be suspended until he finished his four-year term. Brazil's political maturity will be tested as much as its rule of law.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Venezuela's Opposition Plans Parallel Government

Kejal Vyas and Anatoly Kurmanaev

CARACAS—Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro came under growing pressure Monday as the opposition announced plans for a parallel government and U.S. President Donald Trump warned of sanctions if his government moves

ahead with plans to rewrite the constitution.

"It's time for the zero hour," the vice president of congress, Freddy Guevara, said at a news conference on Monday flanked by other foes of Mr. Maduro.

Mr. Guevara called for a 24-hour strike on Thursday, a day before

lawmakers in the opposition-controlled National Assembly are scheduled to name replacements for some of the magistrates allied to Mr. Maduro on the country's top court.

The opposition's new strategy came as the Trump administration said it would impose "swift economic actions" if Mr. Maduro goes ahead with a planned election on July 30 to

the constituent assembly charged with rewriting the constitution.

"The United States will not stand by as Venezuela crumbles," President Trump said in a statement. The president said Venezuelans' "strong and courageous actions continue to be ignored by a bad leader who dreams of becoming a dictator."

People familiar with the discussions in the White House say the administration has been pondering sanctioning Venezuela's state-controlled oil company and its executives or taking an even tougher measure, such as finding a way to curtail the oil revenues on which Mr. Maduro's government depends.

"My sense is there's an intensive review on a variety of options," said Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a policy group in Washington that tracks Venezuela. "I wouldn't be surprised about discussions on very severe measures against the Venezuelan government. If so, I hope they do more good than harm."

The Trump administration hasn't publicly commented on the scope of its potential sanctions against Venezuela.

More than 7.5 million Venezuelans at home and abroad cast ballots on Sunday in an unofficial plebiscite organized by the opposition to serve as a mass repudiation of the unpopular Mr. Maduro's efforts to create a constituent assembly on July 30 that would redraft the constitution. The opposition, along with international human-rights groups and several governments, say the move is an attempt by the increasingly authoritarian leader to seize more power and bypass elections.

Voters on Sunday were presented with three questions. More than 98% of those who voted were against the government on the constitution redo, urged the holding of general elections and demanded that the military, which has helped Mr. Maduro by cracking down on protesters during three months of deadly civil unrest, abide by the law.

Mr. Guevara and other opposition leaders said they were working to create a "government of national unity," an alliance between longtime government foes and dissidents from within Mr. Maduro's ruling Socialist Party. Some formerly loyal lieutenants in the government have openly broken with Mr. Maduro recently, saying he rules in a dictatorial manner.

"This path that we're forced to take carries risk," opposition lawmaker Juan Andrés Mejía said, regarding the creation of parallel institutions. "This state of national unity will not be recognized by everyone. The important thing is for it to be recognized by the people."

Mr. Maduro has alleged that all actions by the opposition amount to an effort to dislodge him undemocratically. His rivals are calling for immediate general elections that polls show the president and his allies would lose. The country is racked by sky-high inflation, chronic food shortages, rampant crime and an economy in

contraction, making the government unpopular with four out of five Venezuelans, recent polls say.

The turnout in Sunday's unofficial plebiscite was below the 7.7 million votes that put the opposition in control of congress in 2015. But organized with scant resources and without the support of state electoral authorities, the vote still provided a boost for the opposition as pressure mounts on Mr. Maduro to resolve Venezuela's debilitating economic and political crisis.

Farmers and business leaders expressed cautious support on Monday for the opposition's call for the strike.

Gabriela López, a manicurist from a working class Caracas neighborhood of Catia, said business has fallen so much at her nail salon that it is almost not worth her showing up. "You might as well go on strike, if it gives any chance of getting rid of this government," she said.

Francisco Martínez, head of Venezuela's powerful business lobby, Fedecamaras, said members would be permitted to join the strike call. Celso Fantinel, vice president of Venezuela's agriculture association, Fedeagro, which grows about 75% of local crops, said that while not all farmers could abandon planting season, "we will come out

to protest and to support the opposition."

Threats of a strike have had mixed results for detractors of Venezuela's ruling Socialist Party. In 2003, Mr. Maduro's mentor and predecessor, the late Hugo Chávez, defeated a monthlong strike called by the opposition and Fedecamaras, an event that polarized the nation and paved the way for the government to radicalize its leftist revolution.

But with the Maduro administration now in dire financial straits and with record-low approval amid allegations of corruption and mismanagement, both the government and the opposition are raising the ante.

If Mr. Maduro does go ahead with the new assembly, "it will represent a new apex in the country's ongoing political crisis," said Risa Grais-Targow, a Washington-based analyst at the consulting firm Eurasia Group. Any such institution would have limited backing and be inherently unstable, likely increasing street protests, she said.

"The country is on an inevitable path to a negotiated transition that prompts real regime change," Ms. Grais-Targow said.

—Ian Talley, José de Córdoba and Juan Forero contributed to this article.

The
Washington
Post

After protest vote, Maduro's foes warn of 'zero hour' for Venezuela's democracy

CARACAS, Venezuela — Opponents of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Monday pledged to defy the government with escalating protest tactics, a day after showing their strength in an unofficial referendum that they said drew more than 7 million votes condemning his rule.

Leaders of the Democratic Unity coalition say they will bring the country to a halt with a 24-hour general strike Thursday, urging workers to stay home and businesses to shut their doors to protest Maduro's controversial plan to overhaul Venezuela's constitution.

They also invited Venezuelans who remain loyal to Hugo Chávez but dislike Maduro, his hand-picked successor, to join them in a unified front to stop the government from moving forward with a July 30 vote to elect delegates for a "constituent assembly" empowered to rewrite the 1999 constitution. Critics see the maneuver as a naked power grab

that would amount to a death sentence for democratic rule.

"This is the zero hour," opposition lawmaker Freddy Guevara said Monday, characterizing upcoming protest measures as a last-ditch effort to save the country from full-blown dictatorship.

The U.S. government intensified the pressure on the Maduro government on Monday, with President Trump vowing in a statement to "take strong and swift economic actions" if the July 30 vote takes place. He called Maduro "a bad leader who dreams of becoming a dictator" and praised Sunday's referendum.

Maduro opponents likened the Sunday vote to an act of mass protest. Of the nearly 7.6 million Venezuelans said to have participated in the balloting — organized by opposition leaders, not election authorities — more than 98 percent voted to reject the government's plan to draw up a new constitution, opposition leaders said. The vote also urged Venezuela's armed forces to uphold the existing

constitution and support early elections.

Buoyed by those results, Guevara said, opposition lawmakers this week will also name new supreme court justices in a repudiation of the current court, which Maduro has stacked with loyalists. The move seems likely to deepen the standoff between Maduro and the opposition-controlled parliament, with the two sides on a path to developing competing legal systems.

[Stripped of their powers, Venezuelan lawmakers accuse Maduro of a 'coup']

On Monday, Socialist Party officials who back Maduro dismissed the 7.6 million vote tally as wildly inflated, claiming that opposition supporters voted multiple times and that the organizers of the referendum did not bother to actually count the ballots. They did not offer any proof to substantiate their claims.

But Félix Seijas Rodríguez, director of the independent Delphos polling agency, said he was "amazed by the

results" of the referendum, given that it was organized in only three weeks and faced significant challenges. The Maduro government blasted the exercise as illegitimate and hurled threats at organizers while attempting to enforce a news blackout.

Anti-Maduro voters also faced the threat of violence. In one Caracas neighborhood, gunmen opened fire outside a polling station, killing one and injuring four.

On July 30, the Maduro government will ask Venezuelans to elect representatives for the constituent assembly. Government opponents see Maduro's effort to rewrite the constitution as potentially a fatal blow to what remains of Venezuelan democracy, particularly if the assembly allows the unpopular Maduro to remain in office beyond 2019, when his term is set to expire.

[Things are so bad in Venezuela that people are rationing toothpaste]

At least 92 people have been killed in more than three months of unrest

and near-daily clashes between security forces and protesters. Opposition leaders said Monday that Venezuela's democracy had reached a tipping point, requiring an intensification of street demonstrations and defections from within the government.

"We interpret [the results] as a message from the people telling us to keep doing what we have been doing, plus much more," said Juan Andrés Mejía, an opposition legislator who organized the referendum. "We will respond to that call accordingly."

Some opposition supporters said they were disappointed that the referendum fell short of the 11 million votes they were hoping for. The final reported tally of 7.6 million votes was also lower than the 7.7 million who voted for the opposition in 2015 parliamentary

elections.

But analysts pointed out that the referendum was only symbolic, lacking the logistical support and infrastructure of an official election. Only about 15,000 polling stations were set up for the referendum, compared with more than twice as many during ordinary elections.

"This wasn't a presidential election," said John Magdaleno, a political consultant and the director of the Polity polling firm. "It's just an unofficial consultation."

Activists and analysts compared the turnout with the numbers of votes Chávez obtained when he held similar referendums.

Chávez never got more than 6.5 million people to vote in his favor in the referendums, analysts noted, and when Venezuela's economy was humming and he was reelected

president in 2012, he obtained just over 8 million votes.

He died of cancer in 2013, and Maduro, his Socialist Party successor, has fared poorly in his shadow.

[Government supporters attack Venezuelan congress, injure opposition lawmakers]

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Despite the latest demonstration of opposition to his plans, few believe that Maduro is willing to change course. Dismissing the referendum results as inconsequential, he called on his opponents to "sit down to start a new round of dialogue" with his government.

Maduro's opponents are boycotting the July 30 vote, and in recent surveys, 85 percent of Venezuelans say they reject changes to the constitution.

"People will be disappointed if they expect the government to react directly to the results [of the referendum] or change anything," said Luis Vicente León, a political analyst and the director of the Datanalysis polling agency, adding that the large turnout was important nonetheless.

"More than 7 million people participated actively in an act of civil disobedience and ignored the government's allegations that it was an illegal one," he said.

The New York Times After Decades of War, Colombian Farmers Face a New Test: Peace (UNE)

Nicholas Casey

LOS RÍOS, Colombia — Every three months or so, Javier Tupaz, a father of six, heads downhill from his clapboard home to work in his cocaine laboratory.

Under a black tent in the jungle, he shovels coca leaves into a giant vat with gasoline, then adds cement powder — the first steps in his cocaine recipe.

Like everyone in his village, Mr. Tupaz depends on coca for cash and has survived decades of war here in Colombia. He churned out his product during the seemingly endless conflict between the rebels and the government, which tried many times to destroy his coca plants. He simply replanted.

But there is one thing that Mr. Tupaz says his crops may not survive: peace.

The peace deal signed late last year between the government and the main rebel group — the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as the FARC — was never just about ending the Americas' longest-running conflict.

The Colombian government also sees peace as its biggest chance in decades to uproot the rebel-controlled drug trade and replace it with crops that are legal, though admittedly less lucrative.

"We celebrated the deal; after all, the conflict was over," Mr. Tupaz said next to one of his large drug vats. "But on the other hand, the FARC had control here — you could

grow coca, have a lab, and you were protected."

Peace means that soldiers no longer have to shoot their way into rebel-held territory to pull up coca plants or dismantle drug labs. Now the FARC, which formally disarmed last month, is joining forces with the government to wean farmers off coca — one of the first collaborations ever between the old enemies.

Outside Mr. Tupaz's village, Los Ríos, the rebels now appear in civilian clothes alongside government officials, selling farmers on crops like black pepper and heart of palm.

"Without the war with the FARC we have a great opportunity ahead," said Vice President Óscar Naranjo, a retired general who spent much of his career fighting the rebels.

There is a clear urgency to the effort. Even as the government and the FARC were negotiating peace, coca cultivation in Colombia soared last year, with a record amount of land being used to grow the crop, according to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Now, as part of its reconstruction plan for Colombia's war-ravaged countryside, the government is promising money to the first 50,000 coca-growing families that take the offer: a monthly payment of about \$325 for the first year that farmers give up coca, followed by subsidies to plant new crops and education on how to grow them.

But with the carrot comes sticks, General Naranjo warned.

"Not everyone will want to substitute their crops," particularly those with deep ties to the drug industry, he said. "And for them, there will be forced, manual eradication."

From the tiny plot near his village, Mr. Tupaz says he has seen this before.

He recalls the early 2000s, when the government gave every family here two cows to ease them off coca production, which led to plummeting prices for cattle when people sold them. Or, when officials came with a plan to grow vanilla, which failed because no one knew how to grow vanilla in Los Ríos.

There was even the time in 2010, after so many fumigations of his coca plants, that Mr. Tupaz simply gave up on drug cultivation and trekked down a muddy path to the bank in town, taking out a loan to plant two acres of cacao, which is used to make chocolate.

"They were just this size when they were sprayed, too," he said, raising his hand a few feet off the ground as he recounted how military planes dropped chemicals that ended up killing his legal crops.

The fumigations were eventually halted in 2015 because the herbicide used, glyphosate, was linked to cancer by the World Health Organization. When the spraying stopped, American officials have argued, coca cultivation increased. (Colombian officials dispute that conclusion, citing other factors, like

the falling price of gold in recent years, that made coca farming more attractive.)

For many rural Colombians, the issue is one of simple math: The coca plant used to make cocaine is far more profitable than anything else that could be grown here.

Los Ríos, with 32 families, sits more than an hour's hike through mud and rivers, cut off from hospitals, markets and virtually every industry except drugs. Its residents say peacetime leaves them with a choice between the criminality of coca and the even deeper poverty they would face by planting something else.

"We have accepted it: We will earn less with other crops," said Edward Cuaran, 23, a coca grower who returned to Los Ríos, despite having attained a university degree, because he could not find work. "But what choice is there?"

Already, coca prices have dropped because so much coca was planted and fewer rebels are involved in the drug trade, leaving many growers without a buyer.

Meanwhile, the government has taken marijuana, long trafficked by rebels, and legalized it for medical production, largely by corporations. Few licenses have been granted so far, and many small farmers complain that they have been shut out.

That has left difficult choices in places like Corinto, a town 300 miles north of Los Ríos, at the foot of mountains threaded with marijuana

bushes and the light bulbs they grow under.

At a meeting of dozens of farmers, a woman opened with the Lord's Prayer and urged God to "to help us all substitute illegal crops with legal ones." Edward García, the mayor, outlined a government package for townspeople on a whiteboard.

"They won't wait forever for us to sign up," he said, warning that the military was already patrolling the edges of the town.

A few farmers have made a successful switch. Near the border with Ecuador, Pablo Ángel Cuaran hacked down a tiny palm tree with a machete, then sliced open the trunk to reveal its juicy center: heart of palm, which he started cultivating a decade ago.

He and other members of a farmers cooperative all plant the crop now, and bargained with the local government to bring them electricity in exchange for their uprooting coca plants. The legal crops stretch out for 200 acres of flatlands that include a mass grave site where paramilitary fighters buried scores of victims.

A tall cross marks the site, now overgrown with a new crop of palm trees. When Mr. Cuaran was a child and coca grew in the fields, a man in a white coat could be seen sometimes at a bend in the road, dismembering bodies with a machete, he recalled.

"You had a lot of money then, but you were never calm," Mr. Cuaran said.

A few hours' drive away, 500 families have signed up for the new government crop substitution program in La Carmelita, a region with a dozen villages next to a rebel demobilization camp. Last month, they began pulling up their coca plants, said Aldemar Yandar, the local coordinator of the program.

"People will soon see what their neighbor is doing, and they will want to copy it," Mr. Yandar said.

But the draw of the coca leaf is always near. Near La Carmelita, a government-sponsored sugar cane processing plant had dropped to a dozen workers, from more than 30 a year ago. Most of the employees had left to harvest coca leaf and the processing plant could not find

anyone to take their places, workers said.

"We are surrounded by coca fields," said Alirio Hernández, a leader in the local processors' association. "They pay double."

General Naranjo, the vice president, remained upbeat. Because the government was no longer focused on war with the rebels, he said, it could finally build the roads and infrastructure to create markets for legal crops, while delivering a finishing blow to the remaining drug traffickers.

But he acknowledged the program might not work for everyone, like those in very small villages not connected to roads, or those who have settled as squatters in national parks, where coca growing exploded in recent years.

"These families will have to relocate," the vice president said.

Campo Elías Chagua, 50, a coca farmer outside a town called La Hormiga, hopes he will not have to move.

On a recent morning, Mr. Chagua trudged through a dense rain forest

of vines and tropical birds, which suddenly opened up to his coca farm. He and his 27-year-old son spent the day harvesting the coca bushes as a fellow coca farmer, Arnulio Quiñones, looked on.

"The FARC would keep order," said Mr. Chagua's wife, Mariana Narváez, remembering the old days.

But, they wondered, would the government? There was still no electricity here, no running water. And now officials were asking them to give up their coca.

"We could go back to violence if the government doesn't hold up its end of the deal on this," Mr. Chagua said.

That day, they visited the lab of a neighbor, who was processing cocaine paste with help of a hired hand. The smell of gasoline and raw leaves hung in the air.

"He just wouldn't survive off of black pepper," Mr. Quiñones said.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

White House Releases Its Plans for Remaking Nafta

William Mauldin

WASHINGTON—

The Trump administration released its road map for remaking the North American Free Trade Agreement that aims to preserve "Buy America" provisions and reduce the U.S. trade deficit, but steps back from some of President Donald Trump's most fiery campaign rhetoric on trade with Mexico and Canada.

The blueprint for a new Nafta shows the White House trying to navigate the shoals of striking a deal with its closest trading partners that can pass in U.S. Congress. It contains nods to Mr. Trump's base of voters fearful and angry over lost U.S. manufacturing jobs—including the broad objective for reducing the U.S. trade deficit with Nafta countries and an effort to retain rules that favor U.S. firms in government procurement.

The plan also backs an unspecified mechanism to prevent countries from manipulating their currencies for trade advantage, an issue of increasing concern among lawmakers and some economists, though one less central to U.S. trade ties with Mexico and Canada. It also includes provisions meant to challenge Mexico on labor and environmental issues.

In the 2016 campaign Mr. Trump repeatedly threatened to withdraw from Nafta, calling it the "worst trade

deal maybe ever signed anywhere." The plan released Monday didn't deviate substantially from established U.S. trade policy.

The Mexican government welcomed the U.S. guidelines, and said it expects the three partners to be ready to begin formal negotiations by Aug. 16. The blueprint "will help set out more clearly the subjects to be negotiated and the timing of the modernization process," the economy ministry said in a statement.

Canada Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said the country welcomed the opportunity to improve the existing Nafta framework. The government would do so "while defending Canada's national interest and standing for our values," she said.

The plan drew a muted response from wary business groups and Republican lawmakers, whose votes will be needed to pass any agreement signed by Canada and Mexico.

Democratic lawmakers, meanwhile, attacked the blueprint as vague and insufficient, indicating the challenge Mr. Trump faces in winning support across party lines. And some of the Nafta objectives laid out in the document could alienate officials in Mexico City and Ottawa, including a goal of eliminating a dispute settlement system that allows

trading partners to challenge duties imposed by Washington on goods allegedly dumped at below market costs.

The criticism underscores the challenge Mr. Trump—or any president—faces in negotiating a new deal in a heated political environment.

Less than two years ago, Barack Obama hammered out the Trans-Pacific Partnership with 11 Pacific nations but couldn't get the deal to a vote in Congress as the 2016 election geared up.

Mr. Trump's previous threats of withdrawing from the deal could still give him some leverage.

Some issues show common ground between Mr. Trump, who has complained about unfair trade practices in Mexico, and Democratic lawmakers, who want much stronger labor and environmental provisions in Nafta to keep companies from cutting corners by moving abroad.

In Monday's road map, the Trump administration backed much stronger labor standards in the new Nafta than the previous ones, which were added late in negotiations as a side agreement to win congressional approval of the original pact in 1993.

Mr. Trump's proposed strengthening of those provisions wasn't enough to draw the immediate support of

Democrats, including those who supported Mr. Obama's policy and the Pacific pact.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D., Ore.), the top Democrat on the Senate committee that oversees trade, called the blueprint "hopelessly vague both in explaining how the administration's specific objectives will benefit the United States on key topics ranging from intellectual property rights and investment, to currency manipulation and government procurement."

Mr. Wyden's Republican counterpart, Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, applauded the administration's commitment to working with Congress but said "future negotiating objectives must include stronger protections for intellectual property rights, upgraded rules and enforcement procedures for American exporters and investors, and improved regulatory practices that treat American goods and services fairly."

Rep. Kevin Brady (R., Texas), the chairman of the House committee that handles trade, applauded the administration and said the objectives are an "ambitious standard for improving Nafta and make clear that the United States is seeking strong, enforceable rules that go beyond any agreement ever negotiated."

If the administration moves as quickly as officials have signaled, lawmakers and outside groups may have only a few months to influence the debate.

U.S. trade representative Robert Lighthizer formally notified congressional leaders on May 18 of the president's plans to renegotiate Nafta, a step that, like Monday's publication of a road map, is required under the 2015 law known as "fast track" or trade promotion authority. The law allows expedited congressional consideration of trade deals, with an up-or-down vote and no amendments, if the administration follows certain procedures.

"We clearly need to see more details, and I look forward to having further conversations with Ambassador Lighthizer," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat.

Under fast track, the U.S., Mexico and Canada may now begin talks in 30 days. U.S. officials say they would like to finish the talks by January, before the Mexican presidential campaign and U.S. midterm elections heat up.

"It's a pretty short period of time, but we also have a political problem" in the Mexican elections, said Carla Hills, a lawyer and consultant who led Nafta's negotiations as U.S. trade representative under President George H.W. Bush.

Faced with a drop in political support, the White House is focusing this week on "Made in America" products in an effort to shore up support among voters skeptical of free trade and globalization.

The administration appears divided between "economic nationalists" who want to erect barriers at the border to defend manufacturing workers and business-friendly officials who say erecting barriers could hurt overall income and economic growth. The modest tone of the principles released by Mr. Trump Monday could be seen as a victory for the business-friendly wing of his White House.

Mr. Trump repeatedly threatened during the 2016 campaign to withdraw from Nafta, which he called the "worst trade deal maybe ever signed anywhere," and as recently as April he considered pulling out of the pact before deciding, after a congressional backlash, to attempt a renegotiation.

"We can keep the current benefits of the Nafta, enhance them with modern, new provisions, and proceed in a way that avoids disrupting the flow of trade and the millions of jobs it supports," said Myron Brilliant, executive vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the biggest business lobby. "The Chamber and its members are ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work."

Before of the release of the negotiating objectives, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country stood ready to begin talks "as soon as its practical," with officials prepared to make changes that modernize the trade pact—reflecting changes in technology and electronic commerce—that improve the economic prospects for workers in all three countries.

One area where the plan does embrace the trade warrior agenda is

a proposal to scrap a special Nafta provision that has made it easier for Canada and Mexico to avert U.S. trade sanctions, the so-called "Chapter 19 dispute settlement mechanism." Canada in particular has made keeping Chapter 19 a priority.

"There are some time bombs in here that will get people going in Canada," said Mark Warner, a Toronto-based trade lawyer with clients in the U.S. and Canada, pointing to the Chapter 19 issue.

In Mexico, concerns that the Nafta renegotiation could prove damaging have diminished in recent months, and that has been reflected in gains in the peso, which is trading at a 14-month high at fewer than 18 pesos to the U.S. dollar. The peso hit a record low around 22 to the dollar in January as Mr. Trump prepared to take office, with investors spooked by the Ford Motor Co.'s decision to cancel a planned \$1.6 billion investment in a new plant in Mexico.

Should the U.S. abandon Nafta and revert to import tariffs under World Trade Organization rules, Mexico would be allowed to impose significantly higher tariffs for U.S. goods than the U.S. would for Mexican imports, Mexican observers say. In the case of vehicles manufactured in Mexico, excluding pickup trucks, the U.S. import tariff under the WTO's most-favored nation status would be just 2.5%.

The Trump administration on Monday highlighted a complicated set of rules that determine which products and components have enough North American content to be traded duty free across the continent's borders.

Mexican officials say that they, like the Trump administration, are also open to reviewing the pact's "rules of origin," as long as proposed changes don't threaten to hurt investment by making it easier for manufacturers to bypass Mexico altogether if they're unable to import certain components from outside the region to make products bound for the U.S.

"We need to make sure that there's equilibrium, and avoid objectives that will be out of reach and affect productivity," a senior Mexican official said.

But the Mexican auto industry, the country's largest manufacturing sector which accounts for about a third of Mexico's factory exports, doesn't want any changes in its rules of origin. Imported components from Asia represent less than 3% of a car's value, according to estimates from the Mexican government.

U.S.-based car manufacturers also don't want significant changes to the rules of origin.

The administration also wants to make Nafta the first U.S. trade pact to police "currency manipulation." That would be a big deal—and one that may be easy to reach, because neither Canada nor Mexico face such accusations, which are usually leveled at Asian trading partners. The goal would be to establish this as precedent for future trade pacts.

—Jacob M. Schlesinger in Washington, Anthony Harrup in Mexico City and Paul Vieira in Ottawa contributed to this article.



Tillerson to Shutter State Department War Crimes Office

Colum Lynch

Secretary of State

Rex Tillerson is downgrading the U.S. campaign against mass atrocities, shuttering the Foggy Bottom office that worked for two decades to hold war criminals accountable, according to several former U.S. officials.

Tillerson's office recently informed Todd Buchwald, the special coordinator of the Office of Global Criminal Justice, that he is being reassigned to a position in the State Department's office of legal affairs, according to a former U.S. official familiar with the move. Buchwald, a career State Department lawyer, has served in the position since December 2015.

The remaining staff in the office, Buchwald was told, may be reassigned to the State

Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the former official told Foreign Policy.

The decision to close the office comes at a time when America's top diplomat has been seeking to reorganize the State Department to concentrate on what he sees as key priorities: pursuing economic opportunities for American businesses and strengthening U.S. military prowess. Those changes are coming at the expense of programs that promote human rights and fight world poverty, which have been targeted for steep budget cuts.

"There's no mistaking it — this move will be a huge loss for accountability," said Richard Dicker, the director of Human Rights Watch's international justice program. The war crimes ambassador's "organizational

independence gave the office much more weight," he added.

Buchwald did not respond to a request for comment. A State Department spokesperson did not confirm or deny the office was being shuttered. "The State Department is currently undergoing an employee-led redesign initiative, and there are no predetermined outcomes," the spokesperson said. "We are not going to get ahead of any outcomes."

One senior State Department official, speaking on background, said it was "pure speculation on someone's part" that the war crimes office was closing. But the official said there's a massive drive to reorganize and consolidate the State Department, including folding special envoy offices back into bureaus to streamline the policymaking process and cut out

redundancies from the unwieldy bureaucracy. The official also cautioned that policymakers often float the idea of closing certain offices and bureaus "just to see what comes back."

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright established the office in 1997, creating the post of ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues to elevate the importance of confronting mass murder in U.S. foreign policy. The decision was part of a growing movement in the 1990s, fueled in large part by genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda, to prosecute individuals responsible for the world's worst atrocities.

Advocates have long believed appointing a prominent, high-level political appointee, preferably with influence in the highest levels of government, was the only way to prod the American foreign-policy

bureaucracy into confronting reports of mass atrocities.

For two decades, the office has spearheaded cooperation with a range of internationally supported criminal courts from Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia to Cambodia and the Central African Republic and pushed for greater U.S. support for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"This is a very harsh signal to the rest of the world that the United States is essentially downgrading the importance of accountability for the commission of atrocity crimes," said David Scheffer, a professor at Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law, who served as the first U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues. "This sends a strong signal to perpetrators of mass atrocities that the United States is not watching you anymore."

The closure is only the latest, and most serious, setback for the office, which has found sometimes grudging support from Democratic and Republican administrations and survived "even the darkest days of John Bolton's rule in the international organization department at State," Dicker said.

Even before the Donald Trump administration took power, the future of the war crimes office was in question. The State Department during the Barack Obama administration also considered downgrading the office and folding it into the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Following the August 2015 departure of Stephen Rapp, the last full-fledged ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues, the Obama administration never nominated a successor for the top post, leaving his deputy, Jane Stromseth, in charge until December 2015.

Buchwald, then a career State Department lawyer, was plucked out of the bureaucracy to head the office. He was given the title of special coordinator and granted temporary ambassadorial ranking, which has since expired. His appointment was never sent to the Senate for confirmation, meaning the office has not had a full-fledged ambassador-at-large for more than two and a half years.

Since its first days, the office has sought to elevate the importance of supporting the prosecution of a rogues' gallery of alleged mass murderers, from Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to Syrian

President Bashar al-Assad, and to push back on institutional fears within the U.S. government that the pursuit of justice may complicate competing U.S. interests to persuade countries to pursue peace or to aid the United States in the fight against terrorists.

For instance, the war crimes office helped run a special rewards fund for information leading to the apprehension of war criminals and was instrumental in pressuring Sudan's Bashir, the world's only sitting head of state wanted for genocide by the ICC, to drop plans to attend a convocation of world leaders at the U.N. headquarters in New York.

Beth Van Schaack, a former lawyer in the war crimes office who first reported Monday morning on the decision to shutter the office, wrote that "Buchwald has apparently been told that his detail will terminate shortly."

Van Schaack wrote that the move against the war crimes office is part of a broader reorganization of the undersecretariat for civilian security, democracy, and human rights, which oversees a series of bureaus that deal with refugees, migration, human trafficking, and the effort to counter violent extremism.

"Having a free-standing office," headed by a U.S. ambassador, is "so critical for maintaining our bipartisan tradition of leadership on both justice and accountability and to make sure we have a strong voice for these issues in the government," Stromseth, the former deputy of the war crimes office, told FP.

Michael Posner, who served as assistant secretary of state for the human rights bureau during the Obama administration, suggested that shuttering the war crimes office did not foreclose the prospect that another State Department agency might carry the torch.

"The key is the appointment of strong people and the provision of adequate resources and political support to enable them to do their jobs effectively," he said. "Treating human rights and global justice issues as foreign-policy priorities advances U.S. interests and values. They are inseparable."

FP's *State Department* reporter Robbie Gramer contributed to this report from Washington.



Tillerson's Grand Renovation Plan in State Department Gets Assistance

Gardiner Harris

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson is moving ahead with plans to restructure his department, and has hired two consulting groups to assist with the process, according to a cable sent to embassies around the world.

In the cable, Mr. Tillerson said he had hired Deloitte and Insigniam to help oversee the reorganization. Insigniam had previously overseen an internal polling effort to get suggestions from the department's rank and file about how to make the department more efficient.

The cable listed five committees that will analyze different aspects of the department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, with

leaders from each organization among the committee members.

Among the committees are those dedicated to ensuring that foreign assistance programs align with national priorities, that there is a balance between the work done in Washington and in the field, and that the department's computer system — famously poorly functioning — adopts cutting-edge technology.

Mr. Tillerson has made clear that he believes the State Department is badly mismanaged. In an interview last week, he said he was surprised at how poorly the government's decision-making process compares with that of Exxon Mobil, where he worked for 41 years, leaving as the chief executive and chairman.

"It's largely not a highly disciplined organization, decision-making is fragmented and sometimes people don't want to take decisions; coordination is difficult through the interagency," he said of the government.

Mr. Tillerson's only direct experience with government service has been during the Trump administration, which has been slow at filling crucial leadership positions.

Mr. Tillerson has said he expected to come up with a reorganization plan by the end of the year and begin putting it to work next year, an unusually long process for such an effort but one that reflects his commitment to a top-to-bottom review.

The first major effort in the reorganization was an online survey, whose results were announced last month. The survey found that many of the 35,386 employees who responded complained that the department was poorly structured, had little accountability and treated its employees poorly.

Among the survey's recommendations was that the issuance of visas, passports and other travel documents be transferred to the Department of Homeland Security, an effort that would require a wholesale transformation of the government's overseas work force. Another recommendation was that foreign postings be extended by one year.

ETATS-UNIS



Zelizer : Who's behind GOP's stunning defeat on health care?

Julian Zelizer, a history and public affairs professor at Princeton University and a CNN political

analyst, is the author of "The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society." He's co-host of the

"Politics & Polls" podcast. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own.

(CNN)Monday night, two Republican Senators -- Mike Lee and Jerry Moran -- announced that they would not vote to send the

health care bill to the floor. The announcement marked a stunning defeat for a Republican Party that controls the White House and Congress and which has made this item the top priority for years.

Not only is health care reform in limbo, but going into the end of July, Republicans don't have a single major piece of legislation to show for President Donald Trump's first six months of office.

As the blame game now begins, everyone in Washington will be asking -- who killed the health bill? As in an Agatha Christie novel, there are many suspects on the train.

The bill itself

This was the main problem. Republicans crafted a piece of legislation that faced immense odds. At the same time that the legislation aimed to dismantle a major piece of the social safety net, it offered nothing much in return to the millions of Americans who were going to lose benefits. The legislation threatened to strip away benefits from millions of poor, elderly, and sick Americans.

The early versions of the bill offered a huge tax cut to the wealthiest Americans. And even after that was stripped out in the revised bill, the legislation was seen as punitive and was opposed by governors from both parties, major players in the health care industry as well as a large majority of Americans who continued to register their strong opposition. Each CBO score -- the Congressional Budget Office's assessment of the likely impact of the bill -- was a reminder of what would happen if Congress said yes. The Republicans managed to put forth a bill that had very few fans -- but many victims.

President Trump

As the President would say of others, he proved to be a "disaster," making things more difficult for the GOP every step of the way. The chaos that is coming from his White House and the ongoing

investigation into Russia -- which he and his advisers have done little to stop, only adding fuel to the fire -- didn't help Republicans keep a focus on this fight. When President Trump, who now has a historically low approval rate of 36% did say something -- like calling the House bill "mean" soon after passage and saying he was fine if nothing passed after the first round of Senate efforts fell apart -- he usually hurt the Republican cause. He proved unwilling or unable to use the bully pulpit of the White House to build public support for the legislation and make a convincing case to Americans that this bill was anything other than hurtful. When Republican Senator Dean Heller of Nevada expressed his strong reservations, a pro-Trump Super Pac threatened to run ads against him.

Trump's response to Monday night's news came in a tweet: "Republicans should just REPEAL failing ObamaCare now & work on a new Healthcare Plan that will start from a clean slate. Dems will join!" Once again, the President is not listening. Democrats might work with Republicans to fix the problems with ACA. But they won't agree to eliminate the program -- which would still mean millions of Americans losing their benefits -- based on a promise from a President, who faces a credibility gap bigger than the Grand Canyon, that the GOP will somehow make things better down the line.

The Freedom Caucus

This bill has its origins in a Freedom Caucus that had pushed the Republicans far to the right in the House. The Freedom Caucus insisted on an extremely conservative measure to kick off this period of Republican government. Sen. Mitch McConnell always had an eye back on the House where he knew that he had little wiggle room. If he did anything to address the concerns of moderates like Susan Collins about the fate of Medicaid, he would never be able to negotiate a compromise in conference committee. Freedom

replace" after promising to do it for years. He also vented about Democrats and the legislative process. "He basically said, if we don't do this, we're in trouble," said one person briefed on the meeting. "That we have the Senate, House and White House and we have to do it or we're going to look terrible."

Story Continued Below

Meanwhile, two senators -- neither invited to the dinner -- were

Caucus allies in the Senate such as Ted Cruz could not be bought off with anything short of removing strong regulatory protections, as was evident when McConnell caved to the senator before announcing the second version of the bill.

Sen. Mitch McConnell

When the Senate deliberations started, everyone predicted that McConnell was a master legislator, Lyndon Johnson style, who would figure out a way to get this done. They were wrong. The truth is that McConnell has spent much of his career as an obstructionist. He is extraordinarily good at stopping things, but not really tested in making legislation happen. In his first major test in his new role, he didn't have the legislative wherewithal to put these votes together. Facing a challenge with this unpopular bill, he stumbled and fumbled.

It turned out that he didn't have some magic trick up his sleeve to bring the votes together. His lack of a strong television presence hurt, particularly given that we have a president who did so little to sell the bill to the public. Everyone was working in the backroom on a bill that sounded horrible to most Americans.

After the collapse of his bill Monday night, McConnell announced his Hail Mary plan. He is going to give this one more try. Listening to the President, he announced that the Senate would move to repeal Obamacare with a two-year delay to allow time for a transition to a "patient-centered health care system." Perhaps the gambit will work, and Republican senators will take a risk on a proposal that will be just as unpopular with the public. But given the opposition to cutting the Medicaid expansion and the patient protections, that is a dicey proposition.

The Congressional Democrats

The opposition on Capitol Hill played this well. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer

kept their troops in line. There were no major defections from the Democrats at any point. In the Senate, this meant that McConnell could only lose two votes if he wanted the bill to pass. The Senate Democrats were also consistently on message, pointing out the many threats posed by the legislation and the reasons it would undercut health care markets. Yet they did this without becoming the story. Although Republicans would have loved to turn this into a tale of partisan Democratic obstruction, they failed. Democrats let the Republicans make their own mistakes -- and let the bill speak for itself.

The grassroots resisters

Since President Trump took office, opponents have been mobilizing at the grassroots. A group of former congressional staffers, for instance, formed the group Indivisible which used the methods of the tea party to create pressure on Republicans in Congress to vote no on repeal and replace. They flooded town halls, spoke to the media, called and emailed congressional offices and appeared at public events to make their case known. The strategy worked. They have been incredibly effective throughout at generating fear among congressional Republicans and making it clear that there would be high costs to voting in favor of this bill.

The irony is that the failure of the Senate bill could be the best thing to happen to Republicans. This stops them from passing legislation that could easily cause a massive backlash and creates an opportunity for moving forward with measures more attractive to their supporters, like tax cuts. But that all assumes that the dysfunction we have seen from this White House and the rightward pressure coming from within the party come to an end. The odds are that those won't. If that's the case, the defeat of health care might portend more legislative failures.

POLITICO Trump blindsided by implosion of GOP health care bill

By Josh Dawsey

President Trump convened a strategy session over steak and succotash at the White House with senators Monday night, trying to plot an uphill path to repealing Obamacare and replacing it with a GOP alternative.

He made an impassioned pitch on why Republicans needed to do it now -- and the political peril they could face if they didn't "repeal and

simultaneously drafting statements saying how they couldn't support the current bill, which they released just after Trump's White House meal concluded.

Trump had no idea the statements were coming, according to several White House and congressional officials. His top aides were taken aback, and the White House was soon on the phone with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

The abrupt collapse of the current plan blew up what the White House wanted for months, and undoubtedly set back Republicans in their goal to overhaul President Obama's legislation. It certainly frustrated a number of the president's top aides, who have negotiated to-the-letter certain packages for certain senators for a summer solution.

But Trump, who has not fretted over the details of the proposed legislation, seemed ready to try something else – trading ribeye negotiations for his favorite pastime.

Within an hour, Trump was back on Twitter, where he put forward a different idea – one he has posited privately for months – after talking to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and top aides.

“Republicans should just REPEAL failing ObamaCare now & work on a new Healthcare Plan that will start from a clean slate. Dems will join in!” he wrote on Twitter.

Trump is fine doing it that way, said one White House aide – as “long as something gets done.”

To Trump, the Obamacare fight has always been about scoring a win. He doesn’t care nearly as much about the specifics, people close to him say, and hasn’t understood why legislators just won’t make deals and bring something, anything to his desk.

He has said publicly and privately he didn’t understand it would take this long. “Nobody knew health care could be so complicated,” Trump

said in February. At a different point, he said only Middle East peace would be harder.

Along the way, Trump has weighed various options, from not paying cost-sharing subsidies and letting the law implode to repealing it without a replacement – which he veered back to on Twitter Monday night.

“He told us months ago, we could just let it blow up and blame the Democrats,” said one activist who met with Trump at the White House.

He praised the conservative version of the law passed through the House in a Rose Garden fête before trashing it as “mean” in a meeting with moderate senators.

Earlier Monday evening, just after Sens. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) announced their opposition, a White House official said that the team would go back to working with individual members on the bill. There was no desire, this person said, to start negotiations over from scratch.

White House officials said they purposefully picked veteran lawmakers who they saw as allies

to attend the dinner with Trump, not legislators they thought were on the fence. But the bill was already on a knife edge, with a vote delayed this week due to the absence of Arizona Sen. John McCain due to a medical procedure.

Trump has privately wondered why legislators don’t seem to listen to him, and the blow from Moran and Lee illustrated the limits of the president’s capacity to master the art of the Washington deal.

“None of the people at the dinner were the ones they should have been worried about,” said one person involved in the discussions.

Trump allies have sometimes attacked Republicans the White House needs to support the bill. He has alienated some senators with his unorthodox tweets and his inattention to policy details, even as they have praised others on his staff. He has sometimes expressed a view that Democrats would like to work with Republicans like he did Monday night, even though his staff harbors skepticism.

“Why would Trump call McCain crusty Monday afternoon?” one

White House official asked. “Because that’s the word that came to his brain.”

According to several people briefed on the matter, Trump and McConnell were prepared to make similar statements Monday evening. But Trump pre-empted the Senate majority leader – sending a quick tweet that took even some of his staff by surprise. “There it is,” one aide said, two minutes after promising news within “an hour.”

“Regrettably, it is now apparent that the effort to repeal and immediately replace the failure of Obamacare will not be successful,” McConnell said, in a missive from Don Stewart, his spokesman.

A White House official said, per usual policy, that Trump’s tweet would speak for itself.

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GOP Senate Leader Mitch McConnell Abandons Health-Care Bill (UNE)

Kristina Peterson and Stephanie

WASHINGTON—Senate GOP leaders gave up their effort to dismantle and simultaneously replace much of the Affordable Care Act, after the defections of two more Republican senators left the party short of the votes needed to pass President Donald Trump’s top legislative priority of his first seven months in office.

In a stinging defection for party leadership, GOP Sens. Mike Lee of Utah and Jerry Moran of Kansas on Monday night became the third and fourth Republicans to oppose the latest version of the GOP bill, which would roll back and replace much of the Affordable Care Act.

Senate Republicans had already lost two GOP votes, from Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Susan Collins of Maine, and the new opposition from Messrs. Lee and Moran meant Senate leaders didn’t have enough support to advance the bill in a procedural vote.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) acknowledged the defeat. “Regrettably, it is now apparent that the effort to repeal and immediately replace the failure of Obamacare will not be successful,” he said in a statement.

In a strategy facing long odds, the majority leader said the Senate would instead vote in coming days on a bill the chamber passed in late 2015 to unravel most of the ACA, a measure former President Barack Obama vetoed in January 2016.

Conservatives in both chambers and Mr. Trump have pressed to repeat the vote on the 2015 bill, which Mr. McConnell said would come as an amendment to the health-care bill passed by the House in May and would allow for a two-year transition.

“Republicans should just REPEAL failing ObamaCare now & work on a new Healthcare Plan that will start from a clean slate. Dems will join in!” Mr. Trump tweeted shortly before Mr. McConnell’s statement.

Mr. Trump had embraced the idea earlier in July when it was proposed by Republican Sen. Ben Sasse, who noted that 49 sitting GOP senators had voted for a sweeping repeal bill earlier.

But many Republican senators have balked at this strategy, saying they wouldn’t feel comfortable rolling back the ACA without being able to tell their constituents what would supplant it.

Mr. McConnell’s latest tactic applies new pressure to conservatives who have so far blocked a bill they have said falls short of ACA repeal by

offering them the chance to vote on exactly that. And while the measure is unlikely to become law, it also offers a way to move on from a bruising fight.

With 52 Republicans in the Senate, Mr. McConnell needed to secure at least 50 GOP votes, with Vice President Mike Pence casting a tiebreaking vote. No Democrats were expected to support the bill. The opposition from Messrs. Lee and Moran ended a frenzied period of negotiations aimed at shoring up faltering GOP support.

“In addition to not repealing all of the Obamacare taxes, it doesn’t go far enough in lowering premiums for middle-class families; nor does it create enough free space from the most costly Obamacare regulations,” Mr. Lee, one of the Senate’s most conservative Republicans, said in a statement Monday night.

Mr. Moran said he objected to the process used to craft the Senate GOP health-care bill, which he said “fails to repeal the Affordable Care Act or address health care’s rising costs.”

Messrs. Lee and Moran are likely to face backlash from Mr. Trump and his supporters, who were eager to see Republicans keep their seven-year promise to repeal the 2010 health law.

Their move comes as a surprise to many in Washington, since Mr. Moran rarely breaks with GOP leaders and Mr. Lee has often voted in step with Republican Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas), who introduced a key measure that GOP leaders incorporated into the bill last week.

On Monday night, the White House issued a statement that repeated a stance the president’s officials have taken in recent days—that GOP senators have no choice but to act.

“Insurance markets continue to collapse, premiums continue to rise, and Obamacare remains a failure. Inaction is not an option,” a spokesman said. “We look forward to Congress continuing to work toward a bill the president can sign to end the Obamacare nightmare and restore quality care at affordable prices.”

Republicans’ struggle to pass a health-care bill has exposed divisions within the party that could imperil other key items on their legislative agenda, including their yearslong push to overhaul the tax code.

Many had expected the next defection to come from the more centrist GOP senators, who have wavered over the latest version of the health-care bill, including Sens. Dean Heller of Nevada, who is up for re-election next year, and Republicans concerned about the

bill's cuts to federal Medicaid funding, such as Sens. Rob Portman of Ohio and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia.

Democrats said it was time for Republicans to begin to work with them on strengthening the health-care system.

"This second failure of Trumpcare is proof positive that the core of this bill is unworkable," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) said Monday night. "Rather than repeating the same failed, partisan process yet again, Republicans should start from scratch and work with Democrats on a bill that lowers premiums, provides long term stability to the markets and improves our health-care system."



Goldberg : Is Rand Paul's opposition to the GOP health bill principled, or cynical?

Jonah Goldberg

The greatest trick any politician can pull off is to get his self-interest and his principles in perfect alignment. As Thomas More observed in Robert Bolt's "A Man for All Seasons," "If we lived in a State where virtue was profitable, common sense would make us good, and greed would make us saintly."

Which brings me to Sen. Rand Paul, the GOP's would-be Man for All Seasons. Paul has managed to make his opposition to the GOP's healthcare bill a matter of high libertarian principle. The fact that the bill is terribly unpopular in his home state of Kentucky — where more than 1 out of 5 Kentuckians are on Medicaid — is apparently just a coincidence.

Indeed, it seems like whenever I turn on the news, he's explaining why the GOP's healthcare efforts are disappointing. "Look, this is what we ran on for four elections. Republicans ran four times and won every time on repeal Obamacare," he told Fox News' Neil Cavuto, "and now they're going to vote to keep it. Disappointing."

Principles, meet self-interest.

But is Paul's idealism really what's driving him, or is that just a

The downfall of the bill is a tough blow for Mr. Trump, who has made it clear that undoing the 2010 law is a priority and has leaned heavily on fellow Republicans to make it happen. Mr. Trump said recently he would be very angry if the repeal legislation didn't make it to his desk, and he was meeting Monday night with a handful of Republican senators to discuss the legislation.

Earlier Monday, the president promised Republicans would replace the law with "something that is going to be outstanding" and "far, far better than failing Obamacare."

"We're going to get that done," he said, "and I think we're going to surprise a lot of people."

convenient excuse for doing what's politically expedient? It's tough to say.

Every time healthcare proceedings move one step in Paul's direction, he seems to move one step back.

Paul learned politics on the knee of his father, Ron Paul, a longtime Texas congressman and irrepressible presidential candidate. In the House, the elder Paul earned the nickname "Dr. No" because he voted against nearly everything on the grounds that it wasn't constitutional or libertarian enough. The fusion of cynicism and idealism was so complete, it was impossible to tell where one began and the other ended.

"I'm absolutely for free trade, more so than any other member of the House," he told National Review's John Miller in 2007. "But I'm against managed trade." So he opposed the Central American Free Trade Agreement, and all other trade deals, not on Trumpian protectionist grounds but in service to his higher libertarian conscience which, in a brilliant pas de deux landed him in the protectionist position anyway.

Ron Paul loved earmarks. He'd cram pork for his district in must-pass spending bills like an overstuffed burrito — and then vote

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price has already encouraged states to apply for waivers giving them more flexibility in enforcing the law and structuring their Medicaid programs. The waivers allow states to require many people to work to obtain their Medicaid benefits, among other changes.

Insurers will immediately be looking for assurances that the cost-sharing subsidies will be paid, said Larry Levitt, a senior vice president at the Kaiser Family Foundation. The drop-dead date for insurers will be mid to late September, when they have to sign contracts for 2018.

The individual insurance market has been stabilizing in most of the

country and could continue just fine, Mr. Levitt said, but insurers will be reading the tea leaves for whether the Trump administration will make the subsidy payments they are expecting and enforce the individual mandate.

There are still some fragile markets, especially in rural areas, and they will likely require some shoring up to make sure insurers are participating and premiums are affordable, he said.

—Michelle Hackman and Louise Radnofsky contributed to this article.

against them in the name of purity, often boasting that he never approved an earmark or a spending bill.

In 2006, Republicans proposed legislation to slow the growth of entitlements by \$40 billion over five years. Democrats screamed bloody murder about Republican heartlessness and voted against it. So did Ron Paul — on the grounds the reform didn't go far enough.

Now I can't say for sure that Rand Paul is carrying on the family tradition.

And yet: Every time healthcare proceedings move one step in Paul's direction, he seems to move one step back. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas offered an amendment that would open up the market for more flexible and affordable plans, like Paul wants. No good, he told Fox's Chris Wallace. Those plans are still in the "context" of the Obamacare mandates.

"My idea always was to replace it with freedom, legalize choice, legalize inexpensive insurance, allow people to join associations to buy their insurance."

Sounds good. Except a provision for exempting associations from Obamacare mandates is already in the bill.

Paul insists he's sympathetic to the GOP's plight and its need to avoid a midterm catastrophe. (It would look awful if the party did nothing on healthcare at all.) His solution? Just repeal Obamacare now, and work on a replacement later. "I still think the entire 52 of us can get together on a more narrow, clean repeal," he told Wallace.

That sounds like a constructive idea, grounded in principle.

Oddly, that's what the GOP leadership wanted to do back in January.

And one senator more than any other fought to stop them and even lobbied the White House successfully to change course. Guess who?

"If Congress fails to vote on a replacement at the same time as repeal," Paul wrote, "the repealers risk assuming the blame for the continued unraveling of Obamacare. For mark my words, Obamacare will continue to unravel and wreak havoc for years to come."

That's true, particularly, if Paul stays true to his principles.



GOP Kills Its Own Health Bill. Now Comes The Hard Part

Sam SteinAndrew Desiderio

Now comes an equally tricky part: contending with a disaffected, mad-as-hell base of supporters who expected them to follow through on a seven-year promise to repeal and replace Obamacare.

That's the reality the party is confronting after Senate Majority

Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) slim hopes of passing a reform package came crashing down once again on Monday when two conservative senators, Mike Lee of Utah and Jerry Moran of Kansas, announced they would vote against a procedural motion on the legislation.

McConnell now faces one of the most difficult obstacles of his decades-long career. His close aides fret that failure to pass some legislation could depress the Republican base and leave the party incredibly vulnerable in 2018. But no amount of procedural maneuvering or policy reshuffling

Republicans are learning the ultimate lesson in policy-making: Overhauling the American health care system is a nearly impossible task.

has allowed him to crack the health care reform code. His options are limited and none are particularly confidence-inducing.

On Monday, McConnell announced that he would allow a vote on a proposal to repeal Obamacare immediately with a two-year window to come up with a replacement. It was a strategic gambit, designed to keep the raucous base at bay. Republican lawmakers voted in 2015 in favor of this approach. But they were assured then that President Obama would veto their effort, and in the current climate there is no guarantee—and, indeed, much doubt—that 50 members will say yes to this proposal.

Should that fail, McConnell could simply start over on Republican-authored reform. There are ideas out there. Most recently, Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA) pitched a plan to send money to individual states and allow them to address their health care needs. But on Capitol Hill, their proposal has scant resonance.

Moreover, going this route risks the one commodity that McConnell doesn't have: time. The majority leader wants to get health care out of the way as soon as possible in order to move on to other legislative priorities, notably tax reform. Hitting the reset button now means months more of negotiations.

Another option for Senate Republicans is to bring Democrats to the table—something that Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) has barred his members from

doing so long as Republicans have continued to push for a repeal of Obamacare. Last week, two Democratic senators told The Daily Beast that they have had preliminary conversations with some of their Republican counterparts about ways to fix the Affordable Care Act. They expect those talks to pick up once the GOP accepts the law's future in the immediate term.

"I think there's a whole lot of interest in getting this right... and the way to do that is to actually slow down the process and go regular order," Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) told The Daily Beast, suggesting that lawmakers should hold hearings, vote on specific amendments, and attempt to craft a bill with 60-plus votes.

Before Monday night, Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)—one of the loudest critics of the bill's steep spending caps on Medicaid—was the only Republican calling for negotiations with Democrats. But shortly after Moran and Lee announced their opposition, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), whose unexpected surgery last week caused McConnell to delay consideration of the bill, said in a statement that the Senate should return to regular order and move away from the current strategy of shutting out the minority party.

"The Congress must now return to regular order, hold hearings, receive input from members of both parties, and heed the recommendations of our nation's governors so that we can produce a bill that finally provides Americans with access to quality and affordable health care,"

McCain said, echoing Schumer's calls for any legislation to be publicly debated.

This approach, however, may be more of a pipedream than the current one. McConnell has warned Republicans that he might have to work with Democrats on fixes if his own party can't come together. But those Republicans don't seem particularly interested in playing along. Asked, for instance, if he'd be open to holding hearings on the GOP bill, Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA) told The Daily Beast that they were unnecessary.

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"I don't think there's any need for that when the bill is public," he said. "It's available to everyone to see, as people have not been shy about commenting on it."

The wild card for McConnell, in the end, is not Schumer or his own party. It's President Trump.

Though he has been largely disconnected from the issue, Trump

has gravitated toward the concept McConnell now endorses: repealing Obamacare now and replacing it at an unspecified later date. He first floated the idea more than two weeks ago.

"Republicans should just REPEAL failing ObamaCare now & work on a new Healthcare Plan that will start from a clean slate. Dems will join in!" he wrote on Twitter on Monday night shortly after Lee and Moran announced their opposition.

Trump also has spoken about letting the law fail, so as to bring Democrats to the negotiating table. Whether his administration follows through on that threat—and it has a fair amount of operational control over the law to do so—could very well determine McConnell's hand.

Either way, McConnell will have to make some tough choices in the days ahead, and he will have to do so knowing that the blowback will be on his members—not the president.

"I think Trump supporters will feel that they have been betrayed by politicians who say one thing and then do something completely opposite to what they have said," said John Feehery, a longtime Republican operative. "I don't think they will blame Trump for this. I think they will blame the senators who have not kept their promises."

The Washington Post Two more Senate Republicans oppose health-care bill, leaving it without enough votes to pass (UNE)

By Sean Sullivan and Lenny Bernstein

Two more Senate Republicans have declared their opposition to the latest plan to overhaul the nation's health-care system, potentially ending a months-long effort to make good on a GOP promise that has defined the party for nearly a decade and been a top priority for President Trump.

Sens. Mike Lee (Utah) and Jerry Moran (Kan.) issued statements declaring that they would not vote for the revamped measure. The sudden breaks by Lee, a staunch conservative, and Moran, an ally of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), rocked the GOP leadership and effectively closed what already had been an increasingly narrow path to passage for the bill.

They joined Sens. Rand Paul (Ky.) and Susan Collins (Maine), who

also oppose it. With just 52 seats, Republicans can afford to lose only two votes to pass their proposed rewrite of the Affordable Care Act. All 46 Democrats and two independents are expected to vote against it.

In a pair of tweets Tuesday morning, Trump decried the defections, called for letting the Affordable Care Act "fail" and vowed to keep pushing for a GOP plan.

"We were let down by all of the Democrats and a few Republicans. Most Republicans were loyal, terrific & worked really hard. We will return!" he wrote in the first tweet.

Which GOP senators have concerns with the health-care bill

He followed that with: "As I have always said, let ObamaCare fail and then come together and do a great healthcare plan. Stay tuned!"

Republicans, who have made rallying cries against President Barack Obama's 2010 health-care law a pillar of the party's identity, may be forced to grapple with the law's shift from a perennial GOP target to an accepted, even popular, provider of services and funding in many states, which could make further repeal revivals difficult.

Meanwhile, Trump and other Republicans will confront a Republican base that, despite fervent support for the president, still seeks a smaller federal government and fewer regulations.

All of these forces remained vexing factors Monday as senators bailed on the bill. And no evident solution was offered by the White House — which has been limited in its sale of the GOP plan — or from McConnell, for how to bring together a party in which moderates and conservatives are still deeply divided over the

scope of federal health-care funding and regulations.

McConnell did announce late Monday that he plans to push for a vote in the coming days anyway, but with a catch: senators would be voting to start debate on the unpopular House-passed bill. McConnell has promised to amend the bill to a pure repeal, but with no guarantee that such an amendment would pass.

"In addition to not repealing all of the Obamacare taxes, it doesn't go far enough in lowering premiums for middle class families; nor does it create enough free space from the most costly Obamacare regulations," Lee said in a statement.

Moran said the bill "fails to repeal the Affordable Care Act or address healthcare's rising costs."

The two senators timed the release of their statements and made clear that modest tinkering around the edges of the legislation drafted by McConnell would not be enough to meet their demands.

They joined a pair of GOP colleagues in calling for a complete redrawing of the legislation that would take many months, short-circuiting McConnell's wish to end the debate this month.

The news threw the effort to pass the legislation into turmoil, with additional Republicans weighing in on Twitter about a flawed process that must take a new direction. Trump tweeted that "Republicans should just REPEAL failing ObamaCare now & work on a new Healthcare Plan."

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.) called for a "new approach" while Rep. Mark Meadows (N.C.) tweeted, "Time for full repeal." White House aides, meanwhile, said they still plan to press ahead.

The setbacks appear to have left McConnell and House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) with few good options. Conservatives have suggested moving a bill that would simply repeal the Affordable Care Act and set up a timeline of several years to figure out how to replace it, a politically risky move that also might lack support to pass.

Another move, which McConnell threatened recently, would be to work with Democrats to prop up the insurance exchange markets that have been imploding in some states — which probably would win passage but would infuriate the conservative base that has been calling for the end of the Affordable Care Act.

"Regretfully, it is now apparent that the effort to repeal and immediately replace the failure of Obamacare will not be successful," McConnell said in a statement released late Monday. He revealed plans to move forward with a vote in the coming days anyway, in some ways daring his Republican opponents to begin debate and open the legislation up to amendments.

Democrats quickly jumped at the opportunity to declare the effort dead.

"This second failure of Trumpcare is proof positive that the core of this bill is unworkable," said Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (N.Y.). "Rather than repeating the same failed, partisan process yet again, Republicans should start from scratch and work with Democrats on a bill that lowers premiums, provides long-term stability to the markets and improves our health-care system."

Republican leaders had returned to the Capitol on Monday still pledging to press ahead with plans to pass a far-reaching overhaul, but the day had begun with uncertainty as the health of Sen. John McCain put the future of the flagging effort deeper in doubt.

In a speech on the Senate floor, McConnell said that he had spoken with McCain (R) on Monday morning and that "he'll be back with us soon." The Arizonan is recovering from surgery to remove a blood clot above his left eye that involved opening his skull.

McConnell had delayed action on the health-care bill until McCain's return in hopes that he could be persuaded to vote yes. That hope faded after Lee's and Moran's announcements, however, with McCain issuing a statement from Arizona calling for a fresh, bipartisan start.

"One of the major problems with Obamacare was that it was written on a strict party-line basis and driven through Congress without a single Republican vote," McCain said. "As this law continues to crumble in Arizona and states across the country, we must not repeat the original mistakes that led to Obamacare's failure."

In addition, Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) hinted Monday that he might vote against advancing the measure to floor debate — departing from his posture last week.

McCain, 80, is awaiting results of tissue pathology reports "pending within the next several days," the hospital treating him said in a statement over the weekend. He will be away from the Senate for at least the rest of the week. A McCain spokeswoman had no further update on his condition Monday.

Graham, perhaps McCain's closest friend in the Senate, spoke to him by phone as he was walking to the Senate chamber for a vote Monday evening. The two had an animated conversation, and Graham said McCain was "dying to get back."

"They were doing a routine checkup and they found the spot and it looks like everything is going to be A-okay," Graham said. He said McCain's doctors "don't want him to fly for a week, adding, 'I think he would walk back if they would let him.'"

[McConnell defers vote on Senate health-care bill as McCain recovers from surgery]

The cause of McCain's blood clot remained unclear Monday. The most common causes of clots in the head, especially for older people, are falls, car crashes and other

incidents that cause traumas, even minor ones, said Elliott Haut, a trauma surgeon at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. By one estimate, 1.7 million people suffer traumatic head injuries each year, with motor vehicle accidents the leading cause and blood clots that affect the brain a common effect.

Traumas can cause blood to leak out of small vessels in two locations in the head: between the brain and a tough, fibrous layer known as the dura, causing "subdural hematomas," and between the dura and the skull, causing "epidural hematomas."

"People die of these every day," Haut said in an interview, emphasizing that he could not speak about McCain's health, because he had no details of the case.

Another possibility is that the clot is related to McCain's history of melanoma, a dangerous form of skin cancer that can spread to other organs, including the brain, and form new tumors. Haut said that is much less likely but not impossible. Diagnosis of a clot in the head requires a CT scan, and it often follows symptoms such as headaches or blurred or changed vision, he said.

Senate Republicans have been under self-imposed pressure to complete their work on health care. As they have struggled to show progress, McConnell has said he would keep the chamber in session through the first two weeks of August, postponing the start of the summer recess period to leave time to work on other matters.

Key Republican senators — and the GOP governors they turn to for guidance — have raised concerns about how the bill would affect the most vulnerable people in their states. Private lobbying by the White House and Senate GOP leaders has not mollified them.

Johnson said Monday that last week he was "strongly in favor" of taking a procedural vote allowing the bill to advance to floor debate. But he said he was unhappy with recent comments by McConnell that the bill's deepest Medicaid cuts are far into the future and are unlikely to take effect anyway.

Johnson said he read the comments in The Washington Post and confirmed them with other senators. He said he planned to talk to McConnell about it Tuesday at the weekly GOP policy lunch. In a statement late Monday, McConnell responded: "I prefer to speak for myself, and my view is that the Medicaid per capita cap with a

responsible growth rate that is sustainable for taxpayers is the most important long-term reform in the bill. That is why it has been in each draft we have released."

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, a Democrat, threatened Monday to sue the federal government if the health-care bill becomes law. The measure "isn't simply unconscionable and unjust. It's unconstitutional," he wrote on Twitter.

The Schumer letter also asks that GOP leaders not move ahead with the bill until the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office releases a complete score on it. The CBO had been expected to release its findings as soon as Monday, but that did not happen. A GOP aide, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter candidly, said a release later this week was possible but not certain.

The CBO has been projecting what the bill would do to insurance coverage levels, premium costs and the federal budget deficit. Having an unfavorable report in the public domain for an extended period of time with an uncertain date for a vote would fuel critics' argument against the bill, making it harder for McConnell to round up votes for it.

A CBO report on an earlier version of the legislation projected that it would result in 22 million fewer Americans with insurance by 2026 than under current law. It predicted that the measure would reduce the budget deficit by \$321 billion over the same period. On average, premiums would first rise, then fall under the measure, the CBO projected.

Neither a McConnell spokesman nor the CBO said when the new report would be released or why it was not released Monday.

White House officials have been seeking to cast doubt on the findings from the CBO and other independent analyses of the bill. But some key Republicans responded with skepticism.

Over the weekend, influential Republican governors said they were not sold, even after talking privately with the officials during the National Governors Association's summer meeting.

[Nevada's governor still doesn't support the Senate health-care bill. That's big trouble for Republicans.]

Several key GOP senators have voiced concerns about the measure's long-term federal spending cuts to Medicaid. Others have said the bill would not go far enough in overhauling the

Affordable Care Act. The opposing pressures have left McConnell in a tough position in which he has struggled to find a solution.

In the meantime, Senate Republican leaders plan to focus on trying to confirm more Trump administration nominees and some less far-reaching legislative goals. As they do, they will be watching for updates on McCain's condition.

"Following a routine annual physical," the Mayo Clinic Hospital in Phoenix said Saturday, McCain

"underwent a procedure to remove a blood clot from above his left eye on Friday, July 14." The hospital added that "surgeons successfully removed the 5-cm blood clot during a minimally invasive craniotomy with an eyebrow incision."

The Finance 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to where Wall Street meets Washington.

Acute subdural hematomas can be fatal half the time and even more often in older people. They can also cause strokes. Unlike clots in the legs and lungs, they must be treated through surgery, rather than blood thinners, Haut said.

In 2009, actress Natasha Richardson died of the effects of an epidural hematoma after declining medical attention following a fall while skiing.

It is not known whether McCain takes blood thinners, but those can

make it more likely that blood will escape from vessels after a trauma, Haut said.

Evan Wyloge in Phoenix and Paul Kane, Robert Costa, Kelsey Snell, Abby Phillip and William Branigin in Washington contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

Health Care Overhaul Collapses as Two Republican Senators Defect (UNE)

Thomas Kaplan

WASHINGTON — Two more Republican senators declared on Monday night that they would oppose the Senate Republican bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act, killing, for now, a seven-year-old promise to overturn President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement.

The announcement by the senators, Mike Lee of Utah and Jerry Moran of Kansas, left their leaders at least two votes short of the number needed to begin debate on their bill to dismantle the health law. Two other Republican senators, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Susan Collins of Maine, had already said they would not support a procedural step to begin debate.

With four solid votes against the bill, Republican leaders now have two options.

They can try to rewrite it in a way that can secure 50 Republican votes, a seeming impossibility at this point, given the complaints by the defecting senators. Or they can work with Democrats on a narrower measure to fix the flaws in the Affordable Care Act that both parties acknowledge.

Senator Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader, conceded Monday night that "the effort to repeal and immediately replace the failure of Obamacare will not be successful." He outlined plans to vote now on a measure to repeal the Affordable Care Act, with it taking effect later. That has almost no chance to pass, however, since it could leave millions without insurance and leave insurance markets in turmoil.

But President Trump was not ready to give up. He immediately took to Twitter to say: "Republicans should just REPEAL failing ObamaCare now & work on a new Healthcare

Plan that will start from a clean slate. Dems will join in!"

In announcing his opposition to the bill, Mr. Moran said it "fails to repeal the Affordable Care Act or address health care's rising costs."

"There are serious problems with Obamacare, and my goal remains what it has been for a long time: to repeal and replace it," he said in a statement.

In his own statement, Mr. Lee said of the bill, "In addition to not repealing all of the Obamacare taxes, it doesn't go far enough in lowering premiums for middle-class families; nor does it create enough free space from the most costly Obamacare regulations."

By defecting together, Mr. Moran and Mr. Lee ensured that no one senator would be the definitive "no" vote.

House Republicans, after their own fits and starts, passed a bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act in May, a difficult vote that was supposed to set the stage for Senate action. But with conservative and moderate Republicans so far apart in the Senate, the gulf proved impossible to bridge. Conservatives wanted the Affordable Care Act eradicated, but moderates worried intensely about the effects that would have on their most vulnerable citizens.

The Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer of New York, responded to the announcement on Monday by urging his Republican colleagues to begin anew and, this time, undertake a bipartisan effort.

"This second failure of Trumpcare is proof positive that the core of this bill is unworkable," Mr. Schumer said. "Rather than repeating the same failed, partisan process yet again, Republicans should start from scratch and work with

Democrats on a bill that lowers premiums, provides long-term stability to the markets and improves our health care system."

Roughly 20 million people have gained coverage through the Affordable Care Act. Repealing the law was a top priority for Mr. Trump and Republicans in Congress, who say it has driven up premiums and forced consumers to buy insurance they do not want and cannot afford.

The opposition from Mr. Paul and Ms. Collins to the latest version of the Senate bill was expected, so Mr. McConnell had no margin for error as he unveiled it. But he managed to survive through the weekend and until Monday night without losing another of his members — though some expressed misgivings or, at the very least, uncertainty.

Mr. McConnell had wanted to hold a vote this week, but he was forced to abandon that plan after Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, had surgery last week to remove a blood clot from above his left eye. That unexpected setback gave the forces that opposed the bill more time to pressure undecided senators.

Already, Mr. McConnell was trying to sell legislation that was being assailed from many directions. On Friday, the health insurance lobby, which had been largely silent during the fight, came off the sidelines to blast as "unworkable" a key provision allowing the sale of low-cost, stripped-down health plans, saying it would increase premiums and undermine protections for people with pre-existing medical conditions.

Mr. McConnell has now failed twice in recent weeks to roll out a repeal bill and keep his conference together for it. He first wanted to hold a vote in late June, only to reverse course after running into opposition.

House Republicans in competitive districts who supported their version of the bill will now have to explain themselves — and Democrats are eager to pounce.

"Make no mistake, Paul Ryan can't turn back time and undo the damaging vote he imposed on his conference," said Meredith Kelly, a spokeswoman for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "House Republicans all own a bill that would strip health care from 23 million Americans and raise costs for millions more, and it will haunt them in 2018."

Mr. Lee, one of the most conservative members of the Senate, was part of a group of four conservative senators who came out against the initial version of Mr. McConnell's bill after it was unveiled last month. He then championed the proposal to allow insurers to offer cheap, bare-bones plans, which was pushed by another of those opponents, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas. But the language ultimately added was not quite what Mr. Lee had been advocating, a spokesman said last week.

Mr. Moran, a reliable Republican vote and a past chairman of the Senate Republicans' campaign arm, had announced his opposition to the bill as drafted after Mr. McConnell scrapped plans to hold a vote in late June. He expressed concerns about how it would affect Kansas, including whether it would limit access to health care in rural communities and effectively penalize states, like his, that did not expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

The pressure on Mr. Moran at home showed no sign of relenting. The Kansas Hospital Association said last week that the revised Senate bill "comes up short, particularly for our most vulnerable patients."

Republicans Aren't Turning on Trump—They're Turning on Each Other

Molly Ball

The House is mad at the Senate. The Senate is mad at the House. Various factions in the House and Senate are mad at each other or mad at their leaders.

Republican lawmakers have yet to turn on President Trump in any meaningful way. But they're starting to turn on each other.

On Monday, the Republicans' tortured health-care effort hit a seemingly permanent snag. But that was only the latest blow; after half a year of consolidated GOP control, not a single major piece of legislation has been enacted. With other priorities similarly stalled, legislators' frustration is mounting.

"We're in charge, right? We have the House, the Senate, and the White House," one GOP member of Congress told me. "Everyone's still committed to making progress on big issues, but the more time goes by, the more difficult that becomes. And then the blame game starts."

The House blames the Senate: At a press conference last week, Kevin McCarthy, the majority leader, waved a chart of 226 House-passed bills that the Senate hasn't taken up. "We will continue to do our work here, and we hope the Senate

continues to do their work as we move forward," McCarthy said pointedly.

Some new members blame their elders. A freshman congressman from Michigan, Paul Mitchell, got a dozen of his fellow newbies to co-sign an op-ed that urges the Senate to get moving, implicitly calling out their senior colleagues for forgetting what they were sent to Washington to do. "Failure to do so is a failure to follow the will of our voters," the freshmen wrote in their article published Tuesday.

For its part, the Senate blames the House. A Russia sanctions bill passed the upper chamber with 98 votes a month ago, but it has yet to come to the floor in the House. That prompted Senator Bob Corker, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to accuse the House of "dilly dallying" and "a ridiculous waste of time."

House leaders say procedural issues and Democrats have tied up the legislation, which the White House opposes. Some members, however, suspect that House leadership is purposely slow-walking the bill to avoid embarrassing the president. A spokesman for House Speaker Paul Ryan denied that was the case,

telling me the White House's position on the issue was "not a factor" in the bill's fate.

Though little heralded, the sanctions bill could mark a moment of truth for White House-congressional relations. If sent to President Trump's desk, the bill would amount to a rebuke of the president's Russia policy, one he would surely be loath to sign. But given the Russia scandal swirling around Trump, a veto would be explosive. And if the GOP Congress overrode such a veto, the president's clout would be severely diminished.

Meanwhile, many senators are annoyed with Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for the rushed, secretive process that produced the health-care bill, and for threatening to cancel their August vacation for a potentially fruitless legislative session. And everyone is annoyed with the House Freedom Caucus, which has also demanded that lawmakers spend next month in D.C.

But everyone is always mad at the Freedom Caucus. Divisions between Republican factions are nothing new; nor is friction between the House and Senate. In an oft-repeated fable, a new Republican member of Congress, eager to go

after the "enemy" Democrats, is corrected by an old bull: "The Democrats are the opposition," he says. "The Senate is the enemy."

A House Republican staffer described the fractious mood on Capitol Hill as "Republican-on-Republican violence."

Still, some wonder whether the current sniping isn't better directed to Pennsylvania Avenue, where the scandal-mired president creates new headaches with every passing day. "We're a big-tent party, so of course there are divisions," the member of Congress told me. "But the only thing that could unite the clans is consistent and engaged leadership from the president. And it's fair to say we've gotten mixed signals."

A House Republican staffer described the fractious mood on Capitol Hill as "Republican-on-Republican violence." As for why lawmakers don't train their ire on the real root of their problems, the staffer shrugged: "Maybe it's just easier to attack people without 13 million Twitter followers."

The Washington Post

Robinson : This country deserves much better than Trump

It's exhausting, I know, but don't let outrage

fatigue numb you to the moral bankruptcy and gross incompetence of the Trump administration. This ugly departure from American norms and values must be opposed with sustained passion — and with the knowledge that things will probably get worse before they get better.

Heaven help us, look where we are. We have a president — commander in chief of the armed forces, ostensibly the leader of the free world — whose every word is suspect. President Trump is an inveterate liar. He dismisses provable facts as "fake news" and invents faux facts of his own that bear no relationship to the truth. He simply cannot be trusted.

We have a president whose North Star is naked self-interest, not the good of the country. Trump cares about his family, his company and little else. He dishonors the high office he holds, then reportedly spends hours each day railing against cable-news coverage that he finds insufficiently respectful. His ego is a kind of psychic black hole

that devours all who come into its orbit.

The best conversations on The Washington Post

We have a president whose eldest son, son-in-law and campaign chairman met with emissaries purportedly sent by the Russian government to deliver dirt on Trump's opponent, Hillary Clinton. Trump claimed on Twitter that "most politicians" would have gone to such a meeting, which is another lie. Try to find politicians who say they would have attended.

We have a president who fired the director of the FBI for continuing to investigate "this Russia thing" — a sophisticated effort by the Russian government, according to U.S. intelligence officials, to tip the election in Trump's favor. Will he also try to fire special counsel Robert S. Mueller III? If he does, will Congress let him get away with it?

We have a president — was he made in Russia? — who has declared this to be "Made in America" week, despite the fact that so many of the retail products that bear his name or that of his daughter Ivanka are made in

Mexico, China, Indonesia and Bangladesh. When asked about this irony by Politico, a White House spokeswoman responded, "We'll get back to you on that." They won't.

Trump has broken his promise to help the struggling middle class. After pledging health insurance "for everybody," he supported legislation that would strip more than 20 million people of coverage. His approval rating, according to a new Post-ABC News poll, has fallen to 36 percent — a historic low for a president at this point in his tenure. Yet Trump continues to enjoy strong support from self-identified Republicans, whose resentment against liberal "elites" he plays like a violin.

His administration is in shambles. Members of his inner circle snipe at one another via anonymous quotes to reporters. They compete for the president's favor not by doing their jobs well but by showing a willingness to defend anything he says and does, no matter how ridiculous. In the space of a week, his surrogates went from "the campaign had no meetings with Russians" to "there was a meeting

but no collusion" to "collusion is not actually a crime." One wonders how they sleep at night.

Trump presents the world with something new: In place of American leadership, there is a vacuum. In keeping with the pattern set at the Group of 20 summit, adversaries will try to use Trump's ignorance to their advantage while allies try to nudge him into doing the right thing. The "madman theory" of foreign relations can only be employed effectively by a leader who is actually steadfast and serious; Trump is neither.

There is no point in looking to Republicans for salvation. House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) still hope to get Trump to sign into law massive cuts in taxes and entitlements. Many rank-and-file members fear Trump's loyal support among the base. The former "party of Lincoln" has adopted the moral code of the Oakland Raiders' late owner Al Davis: "Just win, baby."

So that is what Democrats and independents have to do — win. As long as there are pro-Trump

majorities in the House and Senate, there will be no real congressional oversight and no brake on an out-of-control president's excesses. Incumbency and gerrymandered

districts mean that winning anti-Trump majorities in 2018 will be difficult. But not impossible.

The Democratic Party needs a plan, a message and a sense of urgency.

Trump hopes to bully critics into submission, but the country is bigger than this one president. And much better.

The New York Times

Republican legislative leaders are in a bind. While they appear to have failed for now in their goal of destroying the Affordable Care Act, their eagerness to shower tax breaks on the wealthy at the expense of health coverage for millions of Americans has crimped their ability to pass other fiscal legislation.

This is not a lament. It's just as well that they haven't done anything big, given their goals. But it is a stunning demonstration of incompetence that, with control of the House, the Senate and the White House for six months, Republicans have not only failed to enact any major bills but have also created a legislative logjam that is

The Washington Post

Editorial : In Congress, Obstructionists Are Obstructing Themselves

bound to get worse. This is largely because congressional leaders have tried to overcome solid Democratic opposition by using "reconciliation" rules — which prevent a Senate filibuster when applied to certain legislation on revenue, spending or the debt limit. But until the health care reconciliation measure is either passed or abandoned, they cannot use those rules to pass other legislation, like broad tax cuts for the wealthy that are a key element of their agenda.

With Senators Mike Lee of Utah and Jerry Moran of Kansas announcing their opposition to the health bill on Monday night, and with only two weeks before the summer break,

passage of a bill that some Republicans believe would cut coverage too deeply and others believe would not cut taxes or benefits enough seemed doomed.

But Republican infighting and, by extension, legislative disarray won't stop there. When Congress returns in September, lawmakers will have less than a month to pass budget bills before the 2018 fiscal year begins on Oct. 1. If they miss that deadline, they risk a government shutdown.

To complicate matters, soon after the next fiscal year starts, the debt ceiling will need to be raised, which will be a difficult vote for Republicans who have threatened in the past to default rather than

approve more borrowing. During most of the Obama years, Republicans used legislative tactics to delay or block Democratic bills, precipitate government shutdowns over Democratic budgets and risk default rather than raise the debt limit in a timely way. Now they are in charge, and yet legislation is stalled, a shutdown may be impending and a raise in the debt ceiling is again in doubt.

After years spent as obstructionists, obstruction seems to be all they know. Now they're obstructing themselves, a good thing since it may limit their ability to do harm.

Rubin : Is Trumpcare finally dead?

Jennifer Rubin

Perhaps the two "no" votes from Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.) would have been enough to sink the GOP health-care effort. Senate Republicans and virtually all political watchers have been cultivating a sense of suspense — who would be the third "no" vote? — when in fact there are likely, according to Collins, many more "no" votes (eight to 10, she said in TV interviews Sunday). Then a very public and simple barrier to passage emerged — Sen. John McCain's (R-Ariz.) undetermined recuperation time. With two "no" votes already clinched, Senate GOP leaders could not even pretend to have sufficient support without McCain (who actually might be a "no" vote in the end). Now comes perhaps the death knell for Trumpcare: Sens. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) both announced their opposition Monday night.

To be clear, the Better Care Reconciliation Act was already at death's door before McCain took ill and before Lee and Moran's announcements. A handful of moderates continue to refuse to stomach huge Medicaid cuts. In an act of exceptional duplicity, McConnell reportedly told moderates not to worry about Medicaid cuts (presumably because Congress will never have the nerve to go through with them), which understandably angered conservatives.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson told a Wisconsin paper, "I am concerned about Leader McConnell's comments to apparently some of my Republican colleagues — 'Don't worry about some of the Medicaid reforms, those are scheduled so far in the future they'll never take effect.' I've got to confirm those comments. ... I think those comments are going to really put the motion to proceed in jeopardy, whether it's on my part or others." He continued: "Many of us, one of the main reasons we are willing to support a bill that doesn't even come close to repealing Obamacare ... was because at least we were devolving the management back to the states, and putting some level of sustainability into an unsustainable entitlement program. If our leader is basically saying don't worry about it, we've designed it so that those reforms will never take effect, first of all, that's a pretty significant breach of trust, and why support the bill then?"

Major national and political news as it breaks.

Additional time has never been an asset for the administration. The more time that passes, the more anger Team Trump seems to induce in wavering members. CNN reported:

[Vice President] Pence and top Medicare and Medicaid administrator Seema Verma were deployed to Rhode Island over the weekend to meet with skeptical governors at the National

Governors Association's summer meeting. In private meetings, Pence and Verma tried to convince governors that the GOP's health care bill would give them greater flexibility to design Medicaid programs that were better tailored to their needs.

But the weekend didn't go especially well for the administration. After a speech in which Pence claimed 60,000 disabled Ohioans were waiting to get care, a spokesman for Ohio Republican Gov. John Kasich dismissed the claim as false on Twitter.

[Connecticut Democratic Gov. Dan] Malloy described Pence's private meeting with the governors Saturday as "pretty atrocious" as Pence encouraged governors to dismiss an unfavorable score from the Congressional Budget Office that showed 15 million Americans would lose Medicaid coverage over the next decade.

And of course the Congressional Budget Office's scoring on the newest version of the bill has yet to come out. Each time the CBO has produced a score, decried as fake by the White House, a spasm of concern has gripped the Republican caucus. Republicans get cold(er) feet with each reminder of how many people will lose insurance, be cut off from Medicaid and/or have to pay more for coverage. On the floor of the Senate, Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) needed Republicans, imploring

them to use the time to secure a CBO score and to hold hearings on the bill. (He told Republicans they should "use this extra week, or extra weeks, to do what Republicans should have done a long time ago: hold public hearings. Allow the stakeholders to come in and express their concerns." That idea likely sends shivers down the spines of most Republicans as they contemplate the parade of doctors, patients, insurers, advocates for the elderly and other witnesses who would come forward.)

In sum, given the choice between holding up the Senate until McCain returns and changing at least two of the declared "no" votes, or moving on so as to avoid the agony of extended dismal coverage and the humiliation of a losing vote on the floor, wouldn't Republicans rather proceed to the debt limit, the budget and tax reform? Let's be candid: McConnell knows that forcing some of his members (especially Dean Heller of Nevada) to vote in support of a grossly unpopular bill would be a political death sentence. He cannot in his heart of hearts be thrilled with the prospect of a vote, especially one he will now almost certainly lose; all he need to do is show he tried everything possible.

Initially, McConnell may have figured a ridiculously early deadline for a vote in July could have cleared the decks (win or lose), but now he has a ready-made excuse for ditching the whole exercise. *Sure, they can come back to the bill — sometime. Gosh, if only McCain*

hadn't gotten ill. Well, now we've got four "no" votes. Let a hundred excuses bloom.

UPDATE: McCain has now chimed in with what amounts to a 5th "no" vote. In a written statement he

declares, "One of the major problems with Obamacare was that it was written on a strict party-line basis and driven through Congress without a single Republican vote. As this law continues to crumble in Arizona and states across the

country, we must not repeat the original mistakes that led to Obamacare's failure." He urges Congress to "return to regular order, hold hearings, receive input from members of both parties, and heed the recommendations of our

nation's governors so that we can produce a bill that finally provides Americans with access to quality and affordable health care."

**The
Washington
Post**

Steven Mnuchin, Trump's treasury secretary, is hurtling toward his first fiasco (UNE)

Paletta

By Damian

Shortly before he was sworn in as treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin spoke with his predecessor to get some advice.

Pay attention to the debt problems in Puerto Rico, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew warned Mnuchin, and remember that China's currency issues are more complex than the incoming president, Donald Trump, had suggested during the campaign, according to two people briefed on the exchange who spoke on the condition of anonymity to reveal private discussions.

And in pointed remarks, Lew told Mnuchin to take the debt ceiling seriously — or face a potential financial crisis.

The Daily 202 newsletter

PowerPost's must-read morning briefing for decision-makers.

Months later, Mnuchin is hurtling toward his first fiasco, unable to get Congress, let alone his colleagues in the Trump administration, on board with a strategy to raise the federal limit on governmental borrowing.

During a hearing before the House Ways and Means Committee on May 24, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin asked Congress to raise the debt ceiling before the summer. During a hearing before the House Ways and Means Committee, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin asks Congress to raise the debt ceiling before the summer. (House Ways and Means Committee)

(House Ways and Means Committee)

His struggles are casting doubt on whether the political neophyte, who made his name on Wall Street, has the stature in Washington to press through a vote on a measure that former treasury secretaries of both parties have said is critical to preserving the nation's reputation for financial stability.

Unlike other issues facing the Trump administration — such as

passing a health-care bill and overhauling the tax code — raising the debt limit comes with a hard deadline of late September, according to Mnuchin. Failure to do so could lead the U.S. government to miss paying its obligations, causing what analysts would consider a historic, market-rattling default on U.S. government debt.

"We're going to get the debt ceiling right," Mnuchin said in an interview Monday. "I don't think there is any question that the debt ceiling will be raised. I don't think there is anybody who intends to put the government's ability to pay its bills at risk."

Sensing there could be resistance on Capitol Hill to raising the debt ceiling quickly, he reviewed past debt-ceiling fights. He also holds a weekly meeting with advisers about the government's cash balance and debt issues.

One former Treasury official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive agency deliberations, said officials are now "brushing up on options in the 'crazy drawer.'"

In past administrations, Treasury officials have designed plans to prioritize payments to government bondholders so that if the government runs short on cash it could, in at least a technical sense, avoid defaulting on U.S. debt.

Such a scenario would be very difficult to manage because some bills would either be delayed or not paid — but it could be necessary to prevent an actual default. Still, prioritizing payments this way could lead to a spike in interest rates and a stock market crash, analysts have said.

The coming months promise to test Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs banker and Hollywood producer who joined the administration as a Trump loyalist, with no experience in government but plenty of experience by the president's side, serving as campaign finance chairman.

Trump attended Mnuchin's wedding in June, and on the wall beside Mnuchin's desk is a news clipping announcing his appointment, signed

by Trump along with — in black Sharpie — "I'm very proud of you."

Beyond the tax code and the debt limit, Mnuchin's portfolio includes blocking terrorist financing, easing regulations and conveying Trump's nationalist economic policy at home and abroad.

Mnuchin earlier this summer told lawmakers to raise the debt ceiling in a clean vote that includes no other budget changes before they leave town.

"My preference is to get it clean," he said Monday. "My preference is to get it done, and my preference is to get it done sooner rather than later."

But Mnuchin's push on the debt ceiling was undermined from the start within the White House by Mick Mulvaney, the director of the Office of Management and Budget. Mulvaney is a former Republican congressman and founding member of the House Freedom Caucus who was brought into the White House, in part, to help influence how conservatives would vote on key issues.

Mulvaney publicly questioned Mnuchin's call for a clean vote, saying that he would prefer spending cuts or other budget changes as part of any proposal to increase the debt ceiling. Some White House and Treasury officials were incensed to see Mulvaney break ranks, said several people involved in internal deliberations who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Treasury officials complained to the West Wing that Mnuchin's credibility was being undermined, and Trump told a gathering of Senate Republicans that they should work with Mnuchin, and no one else, on the debt ceiling.

But Mulvaney had sufficiently muddied the administration's message. And even though Trump told lawmakers that Mnuchin was his point person on the debt limit, the White House still has not publicly come out in favor of a no-strings-attached vote. Top administration officials have now conveyed to Congress that they will support combining an increase in the debt ceiling with other budget

changes, as long as Congress works it out soon.

Asked about his relationship with Mulvaney, Mnuchin said, "Mick and I have a very good relationship. I think the press made that out to be more than it is."

Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Ill.) pressed Mulvaney during a hearing June 21 to explain the conflicting signals from Mnuchin and Mulvaney.

"These two are working against each other," Quigley said. "It sends mixed messages."

He added, "It's also a dangerous message that you don't have to fulfill your obligations."

Mulvaney has tried to downplay the rifts but has suggested that his approach was more politically astute.

"It would be foolish of us to come up with a policy devoid of having talked to the Hill," Mulvaney said to reporters in June.

Lawmakers and congressional aides who have met with Mnuchin describe an earnestness that they viewed as refreshing but also easily outmaneuvered by experienced political hands.

"He's certainly in the minority in the administration," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the House Freedom Caucus. "The problem is, yes, you could get a clean debt-ceiling, but it would be 180 Democrats in the House with 40 or 50 Republicans, and that's not a good way to start."

Meadows said that he recently attended a meeting of eight of the most conservative Senate and House lawmakers about how to handle the debt ceiling and that not once did they consider the idea of backing Mnuchin's proposal for a clean debt-ceiling increase.

Mnuchin has struggled to give the public an accurate read of how long the Treasury could pay bills before Congress has to act, alternating — sometimes within a matter of minutes — on whether the true deadline is the beginning or end of September.

A Treasury official later clarified that it had sufficient funds to pay all of

the government's bills through September. The Congressional Budget Office, meanwhile, has projected that Treasury should be able to pay all of its bills through early to mid-October.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) recently said that he would hold the Senate open for two weeks in August to take care of unfinished business — namely the health-care bill. It's unclear whether they'll tackle the debt limit or whether the House, where the odds of raising the debt limit are even more remote, will remain open.

One of Mnuchin's challenges is that he still lacks the Washington alliances many Treasury chiefs enjoy.

He has stayed in close contact with friends and former colleagues from the world of finance, such as Blackstone chief executive Stephen Schwarzman and Brian Brooks, who was his vice chairman at OneWest Bank, which Mnuchin ran after acquiring IndyMac's assets during the financial crisis in 2008. He has also reached out to former treasury secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. and recently met with other former secretaries, including Lawrence H. Summers and Robert Rubin. And he has discussed the debt ceiling and other issues with Glenn Hubbard, a top Bush administration economic adviser, who came away impressed.

"He has an unassuming manner, but he should not be underestimated," Hubbard said.

But although Brooks has been nominated as deputy treasury secretary, that role and many other senior Treasury posts remain unfilled. And many Washington conservatives who have spent years backstopping Republican cabinet members know little of Mnuchin's goals or tactics.

"The guy is literally a name to me and a cipher beyond that," said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, a longtime Washington GOP economic adviser and former director of the Congressional Budget Office.

Although Mnuchin may be struggling to learn the ways of Washington, he does have an important patron: Trump.

In a way, they share the same pedigree. Both were born into wealth (Mnuchin drove a Porsche in college) and generated even more during their careers.

Trump's background was in real estate and Mnuchin's was in banking, but both had a hankering for entertainment and celebrity that drew them close. Even while on Trump's campaign, Mnuchin remained an active Hollywood producer.

During the campaign, the two traveled together extensively, and

Mnuchin surprised a number of Trump's other aides when he took a front-and-center policy role during the transition into the White House, helping design tax and infrastructure programs that were to be the centerpiece of Trump's presidency.

People who have met with him at Treasury describe him as polite and curious, with an unabashed affection for Trump that can cloud his message.

During a speech early in his term, Mnuchin said that Trump had "superhuman" health. At a news conference in Canada, Mnuchin criticized former FBI director James B. Comey for leaking details of conversations with Trump. Typically, Treasury chiefs avoid getting dragged into news-of-the-day politics at all costs. And Mnuchin recently said the president "handled it brilliantly" when meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

To be sure, Mnuchin appears to be enjoying the trappings of being a cabinet secretary. He meets weekly with Federal Reserve Board Chair Janet L. Yellen, often for breakfast or lunch, to discuss a variety of financial market issues.

His wife, actress Louise Linton, has accompanied him to at least two congressional hearings, an unusual occurrence.

Whereas Lew seemed to eschew all the security and publicity — he once stood alone at night in Union Station waiting for his wife to get off a train — Mnuchin travels differently. He was recently seen leaving a Washington custom tailor shop in the middle of a workday with a group of Secret Service agents. His wife gave an interview to *Town & Country* magazine detailing all the types of diamonds and pearls she would wear at their June wedding.

Mnuchin has made clear that a tax overhaul is a focus of the president, tied to a broader goal of growing the economy at a rate of 3 percent a year, compared with 1.6 percent last year.

Economists say that is unlikely in any sustainable way — and roundly agree that, if the debt limit isn't increased, the economy will begin contracting, not expanding.

But on the signed news clipping in Mnuchin's office, Trump made clear that even growing the economy at a moderately faster pace would not be sufficient. Right after he wrote how proud he was of Mnuchin, he added, "5% GDP."



Trump officials open border to 15,000 more foreign workers (UNE)

By Tracy Jan

The Department of Homeland Security on Monday announced a one-time increase of 15,000 additional visas for low-wage seasonal workers for the remainder of this fiscal year, a seeming about-face from President Trump's "Hire American" rhetoric, following heavy lobbying from fisheries, hospitality and other industries that rely on temporary foreign workers.

The increase represents a 45 percent bump from the number of H-2B visas normally issued for the second half of the fiscal year, said senior Homeland Security officials in a call with reporters.

The visas are for workers taking temporary jobs in the seafood, tourism, landscaping, construction and other seasonal industries — but not farm laborers.

Your daily policy cheat sheet from Wonkblog.

[Despite Trump's 'Hire American' pledge, budget bill would dramatically expand the number of foreign workers]

Businesses can begin applying for the visas this week, but must first attest that their firms would suffer permanent "irreparable harm" without importing foreign workers. They will be required to retain documents proving that they would not otherwise be able to meet their contractual obligations, or provide other evidence of severe financial loss, the officials said.

Asked how allowing more foreign workers aligns with Trump's America First policies — especially as the White House kicks off what it has promoted as "Made in America" week — one of the Homeland Security officials said the increase "absolutely does" fit in with Trump's campaign promises.

"We're talking about American businesses that are at risk of suffering irreparable harm if they don't get additional H-2B workers," he said. "This does help with American businesses continuing to prosper."

Another official said the government made the decision after "considering the interest of U.S. workers" and has created a tip line

for reports of worker exploitation and abuse.

"[Secretary John Kelly] first and foremost is committed to protecting U.S. workers and strengthening the integrity of our immigration system," she said.

The officials briefed reporters in advance about the new policy on the condition that they not be named.

Businesses' petitions will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis, and granted without regard to industry type, geographic location or firm size, the officials said. Given that the summer is half over and that normal processing time takes 30 to 60 days, the officials recommended that businesses pay the \$1,225 fee for expedited processing within 15 days.

But the increase may come too late for some Virginia seafood processing plants that pick crab, shuck oysters and pack bait, said Mike Hutt, executive director of the Virginia Marine Products Board, which represents the state's seafood industry.

"This could be light at the end of the tunnel. But here we are in July, and some of these companies still don't have workers," Hutt said.

The lack of workers has led to at least one company shutting down an assembly line this summer, he said, hurting not just the processing plant but also workers involved in hauling, packaging and refrigerating the seafood.

Congress paved the way to increasing the number of H-2B workers in May when it passed an omnibus budget to avert a government shutdown. Part of the deal included giving the secretary of homeland security the authority to increase the number of seasonal foreign workers, after consulting with the secretary of labor, "upon determination that the needs of American businesses cannot be satisfied in fiscal year 2017 with United States workers who are willing, qualified, and able to perform temporary nonagricultural labor." (Farm workers enter the U.S. under a different visa, known as the H-2A.)

Current law limits the number of such visas issued to 66,000 a year — split between the two halves of the year. The cap has already been reached this year. Visas for more than 120,000 positions have been requested so far in fiscal 2017, according to Department of Labor statistics. The seafood industry, which began its hiring season in April, competes with other industries, such as landscaping and tourism, that rely heavily on temporary summer workers.

The H-2B program previously drew strong bipartisan support because lawmakers have a vested interest in supporting their home state industries — whether it's crab-picking in Maryland, ski resorts in Colorado or logging in Washington. But some senators have criticized their colleagues' efforts to bypass public debate about changing immigration law.

Other critics dispute that there really is a labor shortage in the industries that rely most on the seasonal guest worker visas, accusing the industries of exploiting foreign workers at the expense of American jobs.

"This is yet another example of the administration and Congress failing to keep the Trump campaign promise of putting American workers first," said Roy Beck, president of NumbersUSA, which lobbies to lower immigration levels.

Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies, said that instead of "propping up unsustainable businesses by allowing them to become so dependent on foreign workers," the Trump administration should be

providing incentives for such employers to hire the "hundreds of thousands" of teenagers, seniors and others looking for entry-level work.

"Is it really that no one will do the work?" Vaughan said. "Or is it just easier for them to use the body shops that find the workers?"

While some companies use the H-2B program to hire lifeguards, carnival workers and maids, others used it to import engineers, tax preparers and occupational therapists — "jobs that clearly are not unskilled and not so exotic that no Americans can be found to fill them," Vaughan and her colleagues wrote in an analysis of H-2B data released last week.

"These cases suggest that the level of scrutiny for visa approval is inadequate and that employers may be using the program as a way around the rules of other guestworker programs," Vaughan wrote.

Some of Trump's closest allies on immigration on Capitol Hill have also called for cuts to the H-2B program, citing the president's campaign as evidence that American workers are opposed to increases in temporary, low-skilled workers from abroad.

In May, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) gave a blistering speech on the Senate floor opposing a measure in the omnibus spending bill that authorized the doubling of H-2B visas that could be issued during the remainder of fiscal 2017.

"A lot of the arguments for this kind of program boil down to this: No American worker will do that job. That is a lie. It is a lie. There is no

job that Americans will not do," Cotton said. "If the wage is decent and the employer obeys the law, Americans will do the job. And if it's not, they should pay higher wages. To say anything else is an insult to the work ethic of the American people who make this country run."

Cotton and Sen. David Perdue (R-Ga.) are working on an immigration bill that would, over the coming decade, slash by half the current number of 1 million foreigners each year who received green cards allowing them to live permanently in the United States. The senators met twice with Trump on the bill, and Cotton said in a recent interview that the president supported their efforts but also asked them to address temporary workers. The senators are working closely with the White House on a new version of the legislation that could be unveiled by the end of summer.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the committee, in May beseeched their congressional colleagues to remove the H-2B provision and give the Judiciary Committee time to consider any changes to immigration laws.

"This move by leadership and appropriators cedes portions of this authority to the executive branch without a public debate," Grassley and Feinstein said. "We understand the needs of employers who rely on seasonal H-2B workers if the American workforce can't meet the demand, but we are also aware of the potential side effects of flooding the labor force with more temporary foreign workers, including

depressed wages for all workers in seasonal jobs."

Trump in February had called on Congress to pursue a "merit-based" immigration system that would favor high-skilled workers and close off avenues to lower-skilled immigrants and extended family members of permanent U.S. residents.

But Trump himself has used H-2B visas to hire temporary workers at his golf resorts in Palm Beach, Fla., and Jupiter, Fla.

"I've hired in Florida during the prime season — you could not get help," Trump said during a 2015 primary debate. "Everybody agrees with me on that. They were part-time jobs. You needed them, or we just might as well close the doors, because you couldn't get help in those hot, hot sections of Florida."

President Trump has called for a re-examination of the visa process that allows skilled workers to work in the U.S. Here's why the skilled worker visa program is so controversial. President Trump has called for a re-examination of the visa process that allows skilled workers to work in the U.S. (Daron Taylor/The Washington Post)

President Trump has called for a re-examination of the visa process that allows skilled workers to work in the U.S. Here's why the skilled worker visa program is so controversial. (Daron Taylor/The Washington Post)

Washington Post reporter David Nakamura contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Editorial : The Trumps and the Truth

Even Donald Trump might agree that a major reason he won the 2016 election is because voters couldn't abide Hillary Clinton's legacy of scandal, deception and stonewalling. Yet on the story of Russia's meddling in the 2016 election, Mr. Trump and his family are repeating the mistakes that doomed Mrs. Clinton.

That's the lesson the Trumps should draw from the fiasco over Don Jr.'s June 2016 meeting with Russians peddling dirt on Mrs. Clinton. First Don Jr. let news of the meeting leak without getting ahead of it. Then the White House tried to explain it away as a "nothingburger" that focused on adoptions from Russia.

When that was exposed as incomplete, Don Jr. released his

emails that showed the Russian lure about Mrs. Clinton and Don Jr. all excited—"I love it." Oh, and son-in-law Jared Kushner and Beltway bagman Paul Manafort were also at the meeting. Don Jr. told Sean Hannity this was the full story. But then news leaked that a Russian-American lobbyist was also at the meeting.

Even if the ultimate truth of this tale is merely that Don Jr. is a political dunce who took a meeting that went nowhere—the best case—the Trumps made it appear as if they have something to hide. They have created the appearance of a conspiracy that on the evidence Don Jr. lacks the wit to concoct. And they handed their opponents another of the swords that by now could arm a Roman legion.

Don't you get it, guys? Special counsel Robert Mueller and the House and Senate intelligence committees are investigating the Russia story. Everything that is potentially damaging to the Trumps will come out, one way or another. Everything. Denouncing leaks as "fake news" won't wash as a counter-strategy beyond the President's base, as Mr. Trump's latest 36% approval rating shows.

Mr. Trump seems to realize he has a problem because the White House has announced the hiring of white-collar Washington lawyer Ty Cobb to manage its Russia defense. He'll presumably supersede the White House counsel, whom Mr. Trump ignores, and New York outside counsel Marc Kasowitz, who is out of his political depth.

Mr. Cobb has an opening to change the Trump strategy to one with the best chance of saving his Presidency: radical transparency. Release everything to the public ahead of the inevitable leaks. Mr. Cobb and his team should tell every Trump family member, campaign operative and White House aide to disclose every detail that might be relevant to the Russian investigations.

That means every meeting with any Russian or any American with Russian business ties. Every phone call or email. And every Trump business relationship with Russians going back years. This should include every relevant part of Mr. Trump's tax returns, which the President will resist but Mr. Mueller is sure to seek anyway.

Then release it all to the public. Whatever short-term political damage this might cause couldn't be worse than the death by a thousand cuts of selective leaks, often out of context, from political opponents in Congress or the special counsel's office. If there really is nothing to the Russia collusion allegations, transparency will prove it. Americans will give Mr. Trump credit for trusting their ability to make a fair judgment. Pre-emptive disclosure is the only chance to contain the political harm from future revelations.

This is the opposite of the Clinton stonewall strategy, which should be instructive. That strategy saved Bill Clinton's Presidency in the 1990s at a fearsome price and only because the media and Democrats in Congress rallied behind him. Mr. Trump can't count on the same from Republicans and most of the media want him run out of office.

If Mr. Trump's approval rating stays under 40% into next year, Republicans will begin to separate themselves from an unpopular President in a (probably forlorn) attempt to save their majorities in

Congress. If Democrats win the House, the investigations into every aspect of the Trump business empire, the 2016 campaign and the Administration will multiply. Impeachment will be a constant undercurrent if not an active threat. His supporters will become demoralized.

Mr. Trump will probably ignore this advice, as he has most of what these columns have suggested. Had he replaced James Comey at the FBI shortly after taking office in January, for example, he might not

now have a special counsel threatening him and his family.

Mr. Trump somehow seems to believe that his outsize personality and social-media following make him larger than the Presidency. He's wrong. He and his family seem oblivious to the brutal realities of Washington politics. Those realities will destroy Mr. Trump, his family and their business reputation unless they change their strategy toward the Russia probe. They don't have much more time to do it.

The New York Times Trump Says He Has Signed More Bills Than Any President, Ever. He Hasn't. (UNE)

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR and KAREN YOURISH

WASHINGTON — To hear President Trump tell it, his first six months in the White House should be judged in part by the legislation he has signed into law.

At rallies, in speeches and on Twitter, Mr. Trump repeatedly boasts of the bills he has signed — 42 as of this week. He has said no president has “passed more legislation,” conceding once earlier this year that he trails Franklin D. Roosevelt, who he notes “had a major Depression to handle.”

On Monday, he went even further, claiming to have bested all of his predecessors in turning bills into law.

“We’ve signed more bills — and I’m talking about through the legislature — than any president, ever,” Mr. Trump said at a “Made in America” event at the White House. “For a while, Harry Truman had us. And now, I think, we have everybody.”

Turning to Vice President Mike Pence, he added an aside about news media fact-checkers: “I better say ‘think’; otherwise they will give you a Pinocchio. And I don’t like Pinoccios.”

In fact, as he approaches six months in office on Thursday, Mr. Trump is slightly behind the lawmaking pace for the past six presidents, who as a group signed an average of 43 bills during the same period. And an analysis of the bills Mr. Trump signed shows that about half were minor and inconsequential, passed by Congress with little debate. Among recent presidents, both the total number of bills he signed and the legislation’s substance make Mr. Trump about average.

President Jimmy Carter signed 70 bills in the first six months,

according to an analysis of bills signed by previous White House occupants. Bill Clinton signed 50. George W. Bush signed 20 bills into law. Barack Obama signed 39 bills during the period, including an \$800 billion stimulus program to confront an economic disaster, legislation to make it easier for women to sue for equal pay, a bill to give the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco and an expansion of the federal health insurance program for children.

Mr. Truman and Franklin Delano Roosevelt both had signed more bills into law by their 100-day mark than Mr. Trump did in almost twice that time. Truman had signed 55 bills and Roosevelt had signed 76 during their first 100 days.

Mr. Trump has signed several significant bills, many in the works on Capitol Hill since well before he arrived in the Oval Office, as is often the case for new presidents.

Mr. Trump’s allies point to a bill he signed to improve accountability and overhaul services at the scandal-plagued Veterans Affairs Department. They note that the president signed into law spending plans that will significantly raise federal expenditures on the military and border security. And they say Mr. Trump and the Republican-led Congress worked to methodically reduce the burden of government regulation.

That effort to undo regulation involved 15 new laws, which were the result of an aggressive push to employ a little-used legislative tool to roll back government rules put in place by former President Barack Obama. Those new laws could result in a significant shift in the way government regulates employee benefits, worker safety, the environment, public lands and education.

“These repeal bills are now law, which means those Obama regulations have been struck from the books — forever,” House Speaker Paul D. Ryan said recently.

And legislation is not the only tool presidents can wield to enact their agendas. His aides note that Mr. Trump has used executive orders, such as his ban on travel to the United States for refugees and those living in some Muslim countries, to get around what they say is unprecedented obstruction by Democrats. And he successfully won confirmation of Neil M. Gorsuch to the Supreme Court.

But almost half the other bills Mr. Trump has signed into law are ceremonial or routine. The president includes in his count laws like the one to rename the federal courthouse in Nashville after Fred Thompson, the actor and former senator who died in 2015. Even the Republican leadership in the Senate does not count those kinds of bills when they tally their legislative achievements.

By contrast, Mr. Trump’s tally includes three laws to appoint members to the Smithsonian Board of Regents, another to seek research into better weather reports, and one to require the Department of Homeland Security to manage its fleet of vehicles more efficiently.

Marc Short, the president’s top legislative adviser, acknowledged that no one would try to claim that renaming a building should be considered “landmark legislation.” But he defended the president’s repeated promotion of the bills he has signed into law.

“It’s a response to a lot of media coverage that has tried to downplay what he’s accomplished,” Mr. Short said. “There’s an overarching coverage about what’s not been accomplished. The president is

trying to point out what we actually have done.”

Mr. Trump has signed two budget bills that would be required of any president. He signed a law largely endorsing the budget for NASA that Mr. Obama had laid out. And Mr. Trump temporarily extended Mr. Obama’s program that gives veterans a choice of seeing a private doctor in certain cases.

The president complains that he has not gotten the news coverage he deserves for his legislative achievements, though his bill signings are often aired live on television and his push to reverse regulations has been widely covered.

Mr. Trump may yet assemble a more far-reaching legislative record. Getting comprehensive legislation through Congress and to the president’s desk takes time, even when the president’s party controls both chambers of Congress.

By the end of his tenure, Mr. Bush had signed major tax cuts, expanded surveillance with the Patriot Act, authorized votes to wage war, overhauled federal education laws, established free-trade deals and expanded Medicare to include prescription drugs. Mr. Obama eventually passed the Affordable Care Act and imposed new rules on financial services firms. Roosevelt created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Tennessee Valley Authority, enacted Social Security and started public works projects in response to the Great Depression, and began farm subsidies.

Since Mr. Trump took office, the House has passed a health care overhaul, and Republicans have talked about a major infrastructure bill and an overhaul of taxes.

But for him to compile major legislative achievements will take time, said David R. Mayhew, a professor of political science at Yale who tracks the legislative achievements of American presidents.

"Generally speaking, Congress needs many months to do something big," he said.

Mr. Trump frequently points to his work on behalf of veterans, who supported him by almost two to one over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election, as evidence of his legislative success. At a recent rally on behalf of military families, Mr. Trump bragged that he had signed legislation that "went through the House, went through the Senate, and I signed it really fast."

That law was the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, which will allow officials to remove bad employees and promote whistle-blowing, passed in response to a scandal over manipulating patient wait times. The new law puts in place long-sought changes to overhaul management of the department and improve health care and benefits for veterans.

John Hoellwarth, the national communications director for Amvets, called the new law "a positive step" but said it was a small part of overall improvements at the department that had been put in place, slowly, for years.

"A lot of the things that are moving the Department of Veterans Affairs in the right direction actually got underway before the Trump administration," Mr. Hoellwarth said, noting that Mr. Trump had appointed a former Obama administration official to be his secretary of veterans affairs.

Another bill that Mr. Trump signed extended an Obama-era program that allows some veterans to see private doctors, and streamlined the way their deductibles and co-pays get processed. The law is essentially an accounting maneuver intended to give lawmakers more time to debate more substantive changes.

A third new law allows community policing grants to be used to hire and train veterans to be officers.

Since becoming law in 1996, the Congressional Review Act has allowed presidents to use legislation to roll back his

predecessor's regulations. But until Mr. Trump took office, that power had been used only once — by Mr. Bush, who reversed a rule on workplace injuries. Working with the Republican-controlled Congress, Mr. Trump has used it 15 times to unravel what he said were overly burdensome regulations imposed on Americans and businesses.

Senate Joint Resolution 34 eliminated a rule by the Federal Communications Commission that would have prohibited internet providers from collecting, sharing or selling consumers' information without their permission. Another, House Joint Resolution 38, nullified a regulation that would have required coal companies to make sure that waste from mountaintop mining was not polluting local waterways.

Collectively, the 15 regulatory laws may represent the president's broadest legislative impact, though they are less about doing things and more about undoing them. Signing the bills into law allowed the president, with the flick of a pen, to erase rules on the environment, labor, financial protections, internet privacy, abortion, education and gun rights.

"That's saving about \$18 billion a year in compliance costs," Mr. Short said, including the impact of the president's executive orders that seek to reverse regulations. "We think they are a huge part of the economic success of the first six months."

But Mr. Trump can no longer use the tool.

The review act gives presidents and lawmakers 60 legislative days to rapidly roll back major regulations put in place by a previous administration. That deadline has passed. If Mr. Trump and Republican lawmakers want to overturn any more Obama-era regulations, they will have to do it through the normal lawmaking or regulatory processes, which can take years.

New presidents often use their first months in office to sign noncontroversial legislation that has broad bipartisan support. Four of the laws Mr. Trump cites as evidence of his success involved NASA or science and generated little opposition.

Mr. Trump signed legislation that approved nearly \$20 billion in

spending for NASA, keeping its financing level almost unchanged from Mr. Obama's budget. The budget would allow NASA to pursue sending humans to Mars during the next two decades, and would continue work on rockets that have long been in development.

A separate law calls for research on improving weather reports, though it provides no additional funds for the effort. The Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to prioritize "weather data, modeling, computing, forecasts, and warnings for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy."

Finally, two laws are aimed at encouraging women to participate more fully in scientific endeavors. The Inspire Women Act — Inspiring the Next Space Pioneers, Innovators, Researchers, and Explorers Women Act — requires the NASA administrator to "encourage women and girls to study science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, pursue careers in aerospace." The Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act seeks to encourage the creation of entrepreneurial programs to recruit women for science, math and technical careers.

As a candidate, Mr. Trump vowed to wage an all-out assault on the federal bureaucracy. Stephen K. Bannon, the president's senior strategist, has promised a daily fight for the "deconstruction of the administrative state."

But Mr. Trump's legislative assault has moved slowly. The four bills designed to improve government functions that he has signed into law since taking office have made only small tweaks.

One law, called the GAO Access and Oversight Act of 2017, gives the Government Accountability Office more power to compel other agencies to provide information during its investigations. The Follow the Rules Act clarifies existing whistle-blower laws to make it clear that protections apply to employees who refuse a superior's orders to break an existing rule or regulation.

The Modernizing Government Travel Act would give government employees the right to seek reimbursement for official travel by

Uber, Lyft or other ride-hailing companies. Previously, the government would not reimburse such expenses. And the Stop Asset and Vehicle Excess Act — the SAVE Act — is a response to a 2015 inspector general's finding that the Department of Homeland Security was wasting money by mismanaging its vehicle fleet.

The latest bill signed by Mr. Trump, the Securing our Agriculture and Food Act, directs the secretary of homeland security to take steps to safeguard America's food system against terrorism and makes a few other tweaks.

In addition to signing two budget bills, Mr. Trump signed a bill to improve processing of pension benefits for police officers. And he signed a dozen routine or ceremonial bills that attracted little attention.

One law, called the U.S. Wants to Compete for a World Expo Act, declares that the "sense of the Congress" is that the secretary of state should seek to rejoin the Bureau of International Expositions, which puts on world fairs.

One law established a name for a health care center in Center Township, Pa. Another named a community-based outpatient clinic in Pago Pago, American Samoa, the Faleomavaega Eni Fa'aua'a Hunkin V.A. Clinic. Another approved the location of a memorial to commemorate members of the military who served in Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.

When Mr. Trump nominated Gen. Jim Mattis to be secretary of defense, he needed Congress to pass a law waiving the prohibition against appointing a defense secretary within seven years of the nominee's retirement from active duty in the military.

Mr. Trump signed that bill into law, too.

Michael D. Shear reported from Washington and Karen Yourish from New York. Alicia Parlapiano contributed reporting from Washington.

**THE WALL
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The Trump administration in May began the process of replacing the

Milloy : A Step Toward Scientific Integrity at the EPA

Steve Milloy

small army of outside science advisers at the Environmental Protection Agency. In June, 38

additional EPA advisers were notified that their appointments would not be renewed in August. To

Mr. Trump's critics, this is another manifestation of his administration's "war on science." Historians aside,

the administration's actions are long overdue.

The most prominent of the EPA's myriad boards of outside advisers are the Science Advisory Board and the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, or CASAC. Mostly made up of university professors, these boards also frequently draw members from consulting firms and activist groups. Only rarely do members have backgrounds in industry. All EPA boards are governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires that they be balanced and unbiased. While the EPA is required by law to convene the SAB and CASAC, the agency is not bound by law to heed their advice.

The EPA's Obama-era "war on coal" rules and its standards for ground-level ozone—possibly the most expensive EPA rule ever issued—depend on the same scientifically unsupported notion that the fine particles of soot emitted by smokestacks and tailpipes are lethal. The EPA claims that such particles kill hundreds of thousands of Americans annually.

The EPA first considered regulating fine particles in the mid-1990s. But when the agency ran its claims past CASAC in 1996, the board concluded that the scientific evidence did not support the agency's regulatory conclusion. Ignoring the panel's advice, the EPA's leadership chose to regulate

fine particles anyway, and resolved to figure out a way to avoid future troublesome opposition from CASAC.

In 1996 two-thirds of the CASAC panel had no financial connection to the EPA. By the mid-2000s, the agency had entirely flipped the composition of the advisory board so two-thirds of its members were agency grantees. Lo and behold, CASAC suddenly agreed with the EPA's leadership that fine particulates in outdoor air kill. During the Obama years, the EPA packed the CASAC panel. Twenty-four of its 26 members are now agency grantees, with some listed as principal investigators on EPA research grants worth more than \$220 million.

Although the scientific case against particulate matter hasn't improved since the 1990s, the EPA has tightened its grip on CASAC. In effect, EPA-funded researchers are empowered to review and approve their own work in order to rubber-stamp the EPA's regulatory agenda. This is all done under the guise of "independence."

Another "independent" CASAC committee conducted the most recent review of the Obama EPA's ground-level ozone standards. Of that panel's 20 members, 70% were EPA grantees who'd hauled in more than \$192 million from the agency over the years. These EPA panels make decisions by consensus, which has lately been easy enough

to achieve considering they are usually chaired by an EPA grantee.

Would-be reformers have so far had no luck changing the culture at these EPA advisory committees. In 2016 the Energy and Environment Legal Institute, where I am a senior fellow, sued the agency. We alleged that the CASAC fine-particulate subcommittee was biased—a clear violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. We found a plaintiff who had been refused CASAC membership because of his beliefs about fine particles. Unfortunately, that individual was not willing to take a hostile public stand against the EPA for fear of professional retribution. We ultimately withdrew the suit.

The EPA's opaque selection process for membership on its advisory boards has opened the agency to charges of bias. In 2016 Michael Honeycutt, chief toxicologist of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, was recommended in 60 of the 83 nominations to the EPA for CASAC membership. The EPA instead selected Donna Kenski of the Lake Michigan Air Directors Consortium. Ms. Kenski received only one of the 83 recommendations. While no one objected to Mr. Honeycutt's nomination, Sen. James Inhofe (R., Okla.) lodged an objection to Ms. Kenski's nomination, claiming she had exhibited partisanship during an earlier term on the committee.

Congress has also tried to reform the EPA's science advisory process. During the three most recent Congresses, the House has passed bills to provide explicit conflict-of-interest rules for EPA science advisers, including bans on receiving EPA grants for three years before and after service on an advisory panel. The bills went nowhere in the Senate, where the threat of a Democrat-led filibuster loomed. Had they passed, President Obama surely would have vetoed them.

President Trump and his EPA administrator have ample statutory authority to rectify the problem. As Oklahoma's attorney general, Scott Pruitt spent years familiarizing himself with the EPA's unlawful ways. He is in the process of reaffirming the independence of the agency's science advisory committees. This won't mean that committee members can't have a point of view. But a committee as a whole must be balanced and unbiased. Mr. Pruitt's goal is the one intended by Congress—peer review, not pal review.

Mr. Milloy served on the Trump EPA transition team and is the author of "Scare Pollution: Why and How to Fix the EPA."

The New York Times

Khera and Smith: How Trump Is Stealthily Carrying Out His Muslim Ban

Farhana Khera and Johnathan J. Smith

Lost amid the uproar over the Trump administration's travel restrictions on citizens from Muslim-majority countries and the impending showdown at the Supreme Court are the insidious ways that the government has already begun to impose a Muslim ban.

It's doing so through deceptively boring means: increasing administrative hurdles and cementing or even expanding the current travel restrictions that are not under review at the court. The collective impact of these changes will be that a permanent Muslim ban is enshrined into American immigration policy.

Last month, the Supreme Court agreed to hear two cases that challenge the legality of President Trump's immigration and refugee executive order. And it buoyed the Trump administration's xenophobia when it put the temporary ban back

in place and denied entry to people who lack a "bona fide relationship" with an American citizen or entity. (Astonishingly, the government claims that grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and the affianced lack such a relationship, but a federal judge in Hawaii has disagreed.)

While these short-term travel restrictions will be at the heart of what the Supreme Court considers this fall, they have never been the president's ultimate objective. Instead, his endgame, as he repeatedly made clear on the campaign trail, is the "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." And in a quiet, under-the-radar manner, his administration has been hard at work to make that happen.

The State Department has already moved to implement the president's "extreme vetting" directive by imposing new, onerous visa application requirements. Several weeks ago, the agency invoked

emergency review and approval procedures to push through these changes with minimal public comment or scrutiny. They force applicants to submit years' worth of personal data, including from social media accounts.

Of course, not all visa applicants are subject to this review; it's only for "populations warranting increased scrutiny." But everyone knows that term is code for people from predominantly Muslim countries. Even before these requirements were enacted, those people had to endure invasive questioning and prolonged processing times. The Trump administration has simply formalized this as official government policy.

With little fanfare, the administration has also walked back a commitment to speed up the time it takes to get a visa. At the end of June, President Trump rescinded an Obama-era executive order that had required the State Department to make sure

that a vast majority of interviews for nonimmigrant visa applicants happen "within three weeks of receipt of application."

The White House has cited national security concerns for this change, but the impact, especially when combined with the other "extreme vetting" measures, will be even longer delays for applicants and greater backlogs.

Those aren't the only ways the government is stealthily implementing its Muslim ban. The Trump administration has also moved forward with parts of the president's order that the justices will not review this fall.

For example, the executive order tasks federal agencies, including the departments of state and homeland security, with reviewing visa screening processes, at home and abroad, to see if they're sufficiently rigorous. That information will be used to figure out whether or not the short-term travel ban should be extended indefinitely

and whether countries should be added to or removed from the list of excluded nations. This creates an easy way to target disfavored countries.

Just last week, the agencies sent the White House a report detailing their initial recommendations. While the agencies have refused to make their findings public, all circumstantial evidence suggests that Muslim-majority countries will bear the brunt of these restrictions, which is exactly what President Trump has called for.

The Twittersverse and cable news pundits are unlikely to be mobilized by policy changes that come about through these types of bureaucratic processes. Most people are not closely following the intricacies of visa vetting and screening.

That's a shame because there is already evidence that they are working. The number of visas issued to citizens from Muslim-majority countries has decreased by double digits. Among nearly 50 Muslim-majority countries, nonimmigrant visas declined almost

20 percent in April, compared with the monthly average from 2016. Visas issued to people from Iran, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Libya and Yemen, the six countries on the travel ban list, were down 55 percent. Those figures will continue to get worse if these other provisions are implemented.

Finally, consider an embarrassing incident. An Afghan girls' robotics team was initially denied entry into the United States to participate in a science competition. It was only after public outcry and an

intervention by President Trump that they were granted passage. Situations like that are also likely to have a chilling effect on people from Muslim-majority countries, resulting in further decreases.

A Muslim ban, even when implemented through seemingly mundane bureaucratic processes, simply has no place in our country.

The New York Times Brooks : Getting Radical About Inequality

I'm not in the habit of recommending left-wing French intellectuals, but I'm beginning to think that Pierre Bourdieu is helpful reading in the age of Trump. He was born in 1930, the son of a small-town postal worker. By the time he died in 2002, he had become perhaps the world's most influential sociologist within the academy, and largely unknown outside of it.

His great subject was the struggle for power in society, especially cultural and social power. We all possess, he argued, certain forms of social capital. A person might have academic capital (the right degrees from the right schools), linguistic capital (a facility with words), cultural capital (knowledge of cuisine or music or some such) or symbolic capital (awards or markers of prestige). These are all forms of wealth you bring to the social marketplace.

In addition, and more important, we all possess and live within what Bourdieu called a habitus. A habitus is a body of conscious and tacit knowledge of how to travel through the world, which gives rise to mannerisms, tastes, opinions and conversational style. A habitus is an intuitive feel for the social game. It's the sort of thing you get inculcated with unconsciously, by growing up in a certain sort of family or by sharing a sensibility with a certain group of friends.

For example, in his surveys of French taste, Bourdieu found that manual laborers liked Strauss's "The Blue Danube" but didn't like Bach's "The Well-Tempered Clavier." People who lived in academic communities, on the other hand, liked the latter but not the former.

Your habitus is what enables you to decode cultural artifacts, to feel comfortable in one setting but maybe not in another. Taste overlaps with social position; taste classifies the classifier.

Every day, Bourdieu argued, we take our stores of social capital and our habitus and we compete in the symbolic marketplace. We vie as individuals and as members of our class for prestige, distinction and, above all, the power of consecration — the power to define for society what is right, what is "natural," what is "best."

The symbolic marketplace is like the commercial marketplace; it's a billion small bids for distinction, prestige, attention and superiority.

Every minute or hour, in ways we're not even conscious of, we as individuals and members of our class are competing for dominance and respect. We seek to topple those who have higher standing than us and we seek to wall off those who are down below. Or, we seek to take one form of capital, say linguistic ability, and convert it into another kind of capital, a good job.

Most groups conceal their naked power grabs under a veil of intellectual or aesthetic purity. Bourdieu used the phrase "symbolic violence" to suggest how vicious this competition can get, and he didn't even live long enough to get a load of Twitter and other social media.

Different groups and individuals use different social strategies, depending on their position in the field.

People at the top, he observed, tend to adopt a reserved and understated personal style that shows they are far above the "assertive, attention-seeking strategies which expose the pretensions of the young pretenders." People at the bottom of any field, on the other hand, don't have a lot of accomplishment to wave about, but they can use snark and sarcasm to demonstrate the superior sensibilities.

Sometimes, the loser wins: If you're setting up a fancy clothing or food shop you go down and adopt organic and peasant styles in order to establish the superior moral prestige that you can then use to make gobs of money.

Bourdieu helps you understand what Donald Trump is all about. Trump is not much of a policy maven, but he's a genius at the symbolic warfare Bourdieu described. He's a genius at upending the social rules and hierarchies that the establishment

classes (of both right and left) have used to maintain dominance.

Bourdieu didn't argue that cultural inequality creates economic inequality, but that it widens and it legitimizes it.

That's true, but as the information economy has become more enveloping, cultural capital and economic capital have become ever more intertwined. Individuals and classes that are good at winning the cultural competitions Bourdieu described tend to dominate the places where economic opportunity is richest; they tend to harmonize with affluent networks and do well financially.

Moreover, Bourdieu reminds us that the drive to create inequality is an endemic social sin. Every hour most of us, unconsciously or not, try to win subtle status points, earn cultural affirmation, develop our tastes, promote our lifestyles and advance our class. All of those microbehaviors open up social distances, which then, by the by, open up geographic and economic gaps.

Bourdieu radicalizes, widens and deepens one's view of inequality. His work suggests that the responses to it are going to have to be more profound, both on a personal level — resisting the competitive, ego-driven aspects of social networking and display — and on a national one.